

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

EDITED BY CYRIL CONNOLLY

HENRY JAMES'S 'THE AMERICAN SCENE' BY W. H. AUDEN

BEST AND THE WORST—III: LYTTON STRACHEY BY JOHN RUSSELL

CONTEMPORARY SCULPTORS—VI: THE RIDDLE OF PRINER

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
HENRY JAMES'S 'THE AMERICAN SCENE'	<i>W. H. Auden</i> 77
THE BEST AND THE WORST— III: LYTTON STRACHEY	<i>John Russell</i> 91
CONTEMPORARY SCULPTORS— VI: THE RIDDLE OF PRINER	<i>Frédéric Delanglade</i> 117
HOW WE BOUGHT THE 'LORD ANGUS'	<i>Tom Hopkinson</i> 119
WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?— X: AUSTRALIA	<i>Alan Moorehead</i> 134
SELECTED NOTICES: SWISS HUMANISM	<i>K. T. Bluth</i> 144

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W. H. AUDEN

HENRY JAMES'S 'THE AMERICAN SCENE'

This article first appeared as the Introduction to a new edition of 'The American Scene' by Henry James. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Scribners, New York, who hope to bring out an English edition of the book during 1947.

TWO of James's virtues, his self-knowledge, his awareness of just what he could and could not do, and his critical literary sense, his respect for the inalienable right of every subject to its own form and treatment, are nowhere more conspicuous than in *The American Scene*.

Of all possible subjects, travel is the most difficult for an artist, as it is the easiest for a journalist. For the latter, the interesting event is the new, the extraordinary, the comic, the shocking, and all that the peripatetic journalist requires is a flair for being on the spot where and when such events happen—the rest is merely passive typewriter thumping; meaning, relation, importance, are not his quarry. The artist, on the other hand, is deprived of his most treasured liberty, the freedom to invent; successfully to extract importance from historical personal events without ever departing from them, free only to select and never to modify or to add, calls for imagination of a very high order.

Few writers have had less journalistic talent than James, and this is his defect, for the supreme masters have one trait in common with the childish scribbling mass, the vulgar curiosity of a police-court reporter. One can easily imagine Stendhal or Tolstoi or Dostoevsky becoming involved in a bar-room fight, but James, never. I have read somewhere a story that once, when James was visiting a French friend, the latter's mistress, unobserved, filled his top-hat with champagne, but I do not believe it because, try as I will, I simply cannot conceive what James did and said when he put his hat on.

James was, of course, well aware of this limitation; he knew that both his character and circumstances confined his residence to a certain kind of house or hotel, his intimate acquaintance to a

certain social class, and that such confinement might be an insuperable obstacle to writing a book of travel in which the author must try to catch the spirit, not of a particular milieu, but of a whole place, a whole social order. Nevertheless, the challenge, perhaps just because it was, for him, so particularly formidable, fascinated James from the first, and *The American Scene* is only the latest, most ambitious, and best of a series of topographical writings, beginning in 1870 with sketches of Saratoga and Newport.

Immature as these early American pieces are, they seem to me more satisfactory than the subsequent descriptions of England and Europe, even the charming *A Little Tour in France* (1886). Confronted with the un-American scene, he seems prim and a little amateurish, as if he were a conscientious father writing letters to an intelligent daughter of fourteen: as guide books, the European travelogues are incomplete, and as personal impressions, they are timid; the reader is conscious that the traveller must have seen and felt a great deal more than he says, and refrained either from a fear of shocking or from a lack of confidence in his own judgement; but even as a young man, James was unafraid of America as a subject: puzzled often, angry sometimes, yes, but quite certain of what he felt and of his right to say it.

In letters directly and in his novels by implication James makes many criticisms of the English, but he would never have been so outspoken about them as he is, for instance, about the habits of American children of whom he writes in 1870: 'You meet them far into the evening, roaming over the piazzas and corridors of the hotels—the little girls especially—lean, pale, formidable. Occasionally childhood confesses itself, even when maternity resists, and you see at eleven o'clock at night some poor little bedizened precocity collapsed in slumber in a lonely wayside chair.'

And again in 1906: '... there were ladies and children all about—though indeed there may have been sometimes *but* the lone breakfasting child to deal with; the little pale, carnivorous, coffee-drinking ogre or ogress, who prowls down in advance of its elders, engages a table—dread vision!—and has the "run" of the bill of fare'.

All who knew James personally have spoken of the terror he could inspire when enraged, and one of the minor delights of *The American Scene* is that the stranger occasionally gets a glimpse,

at a fortunately safe distance, of what these outbursts must have been like—the unhurried implacable advance of the huge offensive periods, the overwhelming alliterative barrage, the annihilating adverbial scorn. 'The freedoms of the young three—who were, by-the-way, not in their earliest bloom either—were thus bandied about in the void of the gorgeous valley without even a consciousness of its shelter, its recording echoes. . . . The immodesty was too colossal to be anything but innocence, on the other hand, was too colossal to be anything but inane. And they were alive, the slightly stale three: they talked, they laughed, they sang, they shrieked, they romped, they scaled the pinnacle of publicity and perched on it flapping their wings; whereby they were shown in possession of many of the movements of life.'

* * *

'Whom were they constructed, such specimens, to talk with, or to talk over, or to talk under, and what form of address or of intercourse, what uttered, what intelligible terms of introduction, of persuasion, of menace, what developed, what specific human process of any sort, was it possible to impute to them? What reciprocities did they imply, what presumptions did they, could they, create? What happened, inconceivably, when such Greeks met such Greeks, such faces looked into such faces, and such sounds, in especial, were exchanged with such sounds? What women did they live with, what women, living with them, could yet leave them as they were? What wives, daughters, sisters, did they in fine make credible; and what, in especial, was the speech, what the manners, what the general dietary, what most the monstrous morning meal, of ladies receiving at such hands the law or the licence of life?'

Just what, one asks with nostalgic awe, would James have said if confronted with the spectacle of a drum-majorette?

In writing *The American Scene*, the 'facts' he selected to go on are, even for James, amazingly and, one would have thought, fatally few. Though he seems to have visited Chicago (and not to have 'liked' it) he confines his chapters to the East Coast from Boston to Miami. The Far West, the Mid West, the Deep South are totally ignored. This is a pity because the regional differences of the United States are significant though not, I think, so decisively significant as the professional regionalists insist. Today it would be

quite fatal to neglect the States remoter from Europe, not so much as regions in themselves, but because some of the most essential and generally typical American facts, such as the film and automobile industries, the public power projects, the divorce mills, are regionally situated. Still, even in 1906, there were many things west of Massachusetts, the landscape of Arizona, the distinctive atmosphere of San Francisco, to mention only two of them, which would have 'amused' 'the restless analyst', and in whose amusement his readers would have been very glad to share.¹

With the second limitation that James imposed upon himself, however—his decision to reject all second-hand information and sentiment, to stick to those facts, however few, which were felt by him, however mistakenly, to be important, to be unashamedly, defiantly subjective—one can only wholeheartedly agree. In grasping the character of a society, as in judging the character of an individual, no documents, statistics, 'objective' measurements can ever compete with the single intuitive glance. Intuition may err, for though its sound judgement is, as Pascal said, only a question of good eyesight, it must be good, for the principles are subtle and numerous, and the omission of one principle leads to error; but documentation which is useless unless it is complete, must err in a field where completeness is impossible. James's eyesight was good, his mind was accurate, and he understood exactly what he was doing; he never confused his observation with his interpretation.

'The fond observer is by his very nature committed everywhere to his impression—which means essentially, I think, that he is foredoomed, in one place as in another, to "put in" a certain quantity of emotion and reflection. The turn his sensibility takes depends of course on what is before him; but when is it not in some manner exposed and alert? If it be anything really of a touchstone, it is more disposed, I hold, to easy bargains than to hard ones; it only wants to be *somehow* interested, and is not without the knowledge that an emotion is after all, at the best or the worst, but an emotion. All of which is a voluminous commentary, I admit, on the modest text that I perhaps made the University Hospital stand for too many things. That establishes at all events my contention—that the living fact, in the United States, *will* stand, other facts not preventing, for almost anything you may ask of it.'

¹ James originally intended, it appears, to write a second volume dealing with the West and Middle West.

'Where, in the United States, the interest, where the pleasure of contemplation is concerned, discretion is the better part of valor and insistence too often a betrayal. It is not so much that the hostile fact crops up as that the friendly fact breaks down. If you have luckily *seen*, you have seen; carry off your prize, in this case, instantly and at any risk. Try it again and you don't, you won't, see.'

Yet, if the vision had, necessarily, to be brief, it was neither poor nor vague, and only the most leisurely and luxuriant treatment could do justice to its rich possibilities. In the novels and short stories of the previous decade, James had been evolving a style of metaphorical description of the emotions which is all his own, a kind of modern Gongorism, and in *The American Scene* this imagery, no longer inhibited by the restraining hand of character or the impatient tug of plot, came to its fullest and finest bloom.

Indeed, perhaps the best way to approach this book is as a prose poem of the first order, *i.e.* to suspend, for the time being, one's own conclusions about America and Americans, and to read on slowly, relishing it sentence by sentence, for it is no more a guide book than the 'Ode to a Nightingale' is an ornithological essay. It is not even necessary to start at the beginning or read with continuity; one can open it at almost any page. I advise, for instance, the reader who finds James's later manner a little hard to get into, to begin by reading the long paragraph about Lee's statue which concludes the chapter on Richmond: this is, admittedly, a purple patch, but there are many others which match it.

James's first-hand experiences were, necessarily, mostly those of a tourist, namely scenic objects, landscapes, buildings, the faces and behaviour of strangers, and his own reflections on what these objects stood for. Unlike his modern rival at conveying the sense of Place, D. H. Lawrence, James was no naturalist; one is not convinced that he knew one bird or flower from another. He sees Nature as a city-bred gentleman with a knowledge of the arts, and by accepting this fully, turns it to his advantage in his descriptive conceits: '... the social scene, shabby and sordid, and lost in the scale of space as the quotable line is lost in a dull epic or the needed name in an ageing memory'.

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'The spread of this single great wash of winter from latitude to latitude struck me in fact as having its analogy in the vast vogue of

some infinitely selling novel, one of those happy volumes of which the circulation roars, periodically, from Atlantic to Pacific and from great windystate to state, in the manner as I have heard it vividly put, of a blazing prairie fire; with as little possibility of arrest from "criticism" in the one case as from the bleating of lost sheep on the other.'

★

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'... the hidden ponds where the season itself seemed to bend as a young bedizened, a slightly melodramatic mother, before taking some guilty flight, hangs over the crib of her sleeping child.'

But it is in his treatment of social objects and mental concepts that James reveals most clearly his great and highly original poetic gift. Outside of fairy tales, I know of no book in which things so often and so naturally become persons.

Buildings address James: '*Un bon mouvement*, therefore: you must make a dash for it, but you'll see I'm worth it'.

James addresses buildings: 'You overdo it for what you are; you overdo it still more for what you may be; and don't pretend above all, with the object lesson supplied you, close at hand, by the queer case of Newport, don't pretend, we say, not to know what we mean'.

Buildings address each other: 'Exquisite was what they called you, eh? We'll teach you, then, little sneak, to be exquisite! We'll allow none of that rot round here.'

At Farmington, the bullying railroad orders taste and tradition '—off their decent avenue without a fear that they will "stand up" to it'.

From Philadelphia the alluring train, 'disvulgarized of passengers, steams away, in disinterested empty form, to some terminus too noble to be marked in *our* poor schedules'.

Again, since *The Faerie Queene*, what book has been more hospitable to allegorical figures:

At Mount Vernon, 'the slight, pale, bleeding Past, in a patched homespun suit, stands there taking the thanks of the Bloated Present, having woundedly rescued from thieves and brought to his door the fat, locked pocket book of which that personage appears to be the owner'.

At Baltimore the Muse of History descends in a quick white flash to declare that she has found that city 'a charming patient'.

In Richmond the Spirit of the South reveals herself for a vivid moment, 'a figure somehow blighted and stricken discomfortably, impossibly seated in an invalid chair, and yet facing one with strange eyes that were half a defiance and half a deprecation of one's noticing, and much more of one's referring to, any abnormal sign'.

In Florida the American Woman is waiting to state her case in the manner of a politician in Thucydides: 'How can I do *all* the grace, all the interest, as I'm expected to? Yes, literally all the interest that isn't the mere interest in the money. . . . All I want—that is all I need, for there is perhaps a difference—is, to put it simply, that my parents and my brothers and my male cousins should consent to exist otherwise than occultly, undiscoverably, or, as I suppose you'd call it, irresponsibly.'

When 'the recent immigrant', to copy the Jamesian nomenclature, compares his own impressions with those of 'the restless analyst', he is immediately struck by how little, on the one hand, America has changed in any decisive way—the changes, great as they are, seem but extensions and intensifications of a pattern already observable thirty years ago—and by the irrevocable catastrophic alterations in Europe, on the other—what recognizable identity is there between the confident glittering hostess of those days and the bruised, beggared, debased, dead-beat harridan of ours? For has not what James called *The Margin* 'by which the total of American life, huge as it already appears, is still so surrounded as to represent for the mind's eye on a general view but a scant central flotilla huddled as for very fear of the fathomless depth of water, the too formidable future' become the contemporary ambience of Europe, with this difference, that, while its vague and vast fluidity still, on the whole, continues to affect the observer on this side of the Atlantic as being, if not positively friendly, at least neutral, to the observer on the other side it looms with the extreme of menace, charged with every foreboding of worse disasters to come?

The features of the American scene which most struck the analyst then are those which most strike the immigrant now, whether they are minor details like the magnificent boots and

teeth, the heavy consumption of candy, 'the vagueness of separation between apartments, between hall and room, between one room and another, between the one you are in and the one you are not in', or major matters like the promiscuous gregariousness, the lack, even among the rich, of constituted privacy, the absence of forms for vice no less than for virtue, the 'spoiling' of women and their responsibility for the whole of culture, above all the elimination from the scene of the squire and the parson.¹ It takes the immigrant a little time to discover just why the United States seems so different from any of the countries he resentfully or nostalgically remembers, but the crucial difference is, I think, just this last elimination of 'the pervasive Patron' and 'the old ecclesiastical arrogance for which, oh! a thousand times, the small substitutes, the mere multiplication of the signs of theological enterprise, in the tradition and on the scale of commercial and industrial enterprise, have no attenuation worth mentioning'.

What in fact is missing, what has been consciously rejected, with all that such a rejection implies, is the *romanitas* upon which Europe was founded and which she has not ceased attempting to preserve. This is a point which, at the risk of becoming tedious, must be enlarged upon, since the issue between America and Europe is no longer a choice between social levelling and social distinctions. The levelling is a universal and inexorable fact. Nothing can prevent the liquidation of the European nations or any other nation in the great continents, Asia, Africa, America, the liquidation of the 'individual' (in the eighteenth-century liberal meaning of the word) in the collective proletariat, the liquidation of Christendom in the neutral world. From that there is no refuge anywhere. But one's final judgement of Europe and America depends, it seems to me, upon whether one thinks that America (or America as a symbol) is right to reject *romanitas* or that Europe is right in trying to find new forms of it suited to the 'democratized' societies of our age.

¹ The immigrant would like to add one element, the excesses of the climate, which is either much too hot or much too cold or much too wet or much too dry or even, in the case of the Californian coast, much too mild, a sort of meteorological Back Bay. And then—oh, dear!—the *insects*, and the *snakes*, and the *poison ivy*. . . . The truth is, Nature never intended human beings to live here, and her hostility, which confined the Indian to a nomad life and forbids the white man to relax his vigilance and will for one instant, must be an important factor in determining the American character.

The fundamental presupposition of *romanitas*, secular or sacred, is that virtue is prior to liberty, *i.e.* what matters most is that people should think and act rightly; of course it is preferable that they should do so consciously of their own free will, but if they cannot or will not, they must be made to, the majority by the spiritual pressure of education and tradition, the minority by physical coercion, for liberty to act wrongly is not liberty but licence. The antagonistic presupposition, which is not peculiar to America and would probably not be accepted by many Americans, but for which this country has come, symbolically, to stand, is that liberty is prior to virtue, *i.e.* liberty cannot be distinguished from licence, for freedom of choice is neither good nor bad but the human pre-requisite without which virtue and vice have no meaning. Virtue is, of course, preferable to vice, but to choose vice is preferable to having virtue chosen for one.

To those who make the first presupposition, both State and Church have the same positive moral function; to those who make the second, their functions differ: the function of the State becomes a negative one—to prevent the will of the strong from interfering with the will of the weak, or the wills of the weak with one another, even if the strong should be in the right and the weak in the wrong—and the Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, divorced from the State, becomes a witness, an offered opportunity, a community of *converts*. The real issue has been obscured, for both sides, by the historical struggle for social equality which made liberty seem the virtue—or licence the vice—of which equality was the prized or detested pre-condition. This was natural since, when the struggle began, the most glaring cause of the lack of liberty was the privileged position of the few and the unprivileged position of the many so that a blow struck for equality was, in most cases, at the same time a blow struck for liberty, but the assumed order of priority was false all the same. The possibility that De Tocqueville foresaw from an inspection of America in 1830, has become a dreadful reality in the Europe of 1946, namely, that *romanitas* is perfectly capable of adapting itself to an egalitarian and untraditional society; it can even drop absolute values and replace the priest by the social engineer without violating its essential nature (which is and always was not Christian but Manichæan), which it reveals in its democratic form by its persecution of dissident minorities. And it was from America,

the first egalitarian society, that it learned how to adapt itself. For instance, it took the technique of mass advertising, eliminated the competitive element and changed the sales object from breakfast foods to political passions; it took the egalitarian substitute for tradition, fashion, and translated it from the putting over of best-sellers and evening frocks to the selling of an ever-switching party line; it took the extra-legal vigilantes and put them into official uniforms; it took the inert evil of race prejudice and made it a dynamic evil. An America which does not realize the difference between equality and liberty is in danger, for, start with equality in order to arrive at liberty and the moment you come to a situation where inequality is or seems to you, rightly or wrongly, a stubborn fact, you will come to grief. For instance, the unequal distribution of intellectual gifts is a fact; since they refuse to face it, the institutions of Higher Learning in America cannot decide whether they are to be Liberal Arts Colleges for the exceptional few or vocational schools for the average many, and so fail to do their duty by either. On the other, more sinister, hand, the Southerner, rightly or wrongly, believes that the negro is his inferior; by putting equality before liberty, he then refuses him the most elementary human liberties, for example, the educational and economic liberties that are the only means by which the negro could possibly become the equal of the white, so that the latter can never be proven mistaken.

Democratic snobbery or race prejudice is uglier than the old aristocratic snobbery because the included are relatively so many and the excluded relatively so few. The exclusiveness, for instance, of Baron de Charlus is forgivable and even charming. If Charlus will speak to only half a dozen people, it cannot be supposed that the millions suffer severely from being unable to speak to Charlus; his behaviour is frankly irrational, a personal act from which, if anyone suffers, it is only himself. The exclusiveness of the American Country Club—I cannot share James's pleasure in that institution—is both inexcusable and vulgar, for, since it purports to be democratic, its exclusion of Jews is a contradiction for which it has to invent dishonest rationalizations.

As the issue between virtue first and liberty first becomes clearer, so does the realization that the cost to any society that accepts the latter is extremely high, and to some may seem

prohibitive. One can no longer make the task look easier than it is by pretending, as the liberals of the Enlightenment believed, that men are naturally good. No, it is just as true as it ever was that man is born in sin, that the majority are always, relatively, in the wrong, the minority sometimes, relatively, in the right (everyone, of course, is free at any time to belong to either), and all, before God, absolutely in the wrong, that all of the people some of the time and some of the people most of the time will abuse their liberty and treat it as the licence of an escaped slave. But if the principle is accepted, it means accepting this: it means accepting a State that, in comparison to its Roman rival, is dangerously weak (though realizing that, since people will never cease trying to interfere with the liberties of others in pursuing their own, the State can never wither away. Tyranny today, anarchy tomorrow is a neo-Roman daydream); it means accepting a ‘Society’, in the collective inclusive sense that is as neutral to values (liberty is not a value but the ground of value) as the ‘Nature’ of physics;¹ it means accepting an educational system in which, in spite of the fact that authority is essential to the growth of the individual who is lost without it, the responsibility for recognizing authority is laid on the pupil; it means accepting the impossibility of any ‘official’ or ‘public’ art; and, for the individual, it means accepting the lot of the Wandering Jew, *i.e.* the loneliness and anxiety of having to choose himself, his faith, his vocation, his tastes. The Margin is a hard taskmaster; it says to the individual: ‘It’s no good your running to me and asking me to make you into someone. You must choose. I won’t try to prevent your choice, but I can’t and won’t help you make it. If you try to put your trust in me, in public opinion, you will become, not someone but no one, a neuter atom of the public.’

This situation of the individual has far-reaching consequences for the artist. With his usual uncannily accurate foresight, De Tocqueville wrote: ‘Poets living in democratic times will prefer the delineation of passions and ideas to that of persons and achievements. . . . The destinies of mankind, man himself taken aloof from his country and his age and standing in the presence of Nature and God, with his passions, his doubts, his rare

¹Is not the æsthetic effect of Rockefeller Centre due to the *completeness* with which, in its handling of material and its design as a public building, this double neutrality of ‘Nature’ and ‘Society’ is accepted?

prosperities and inconceivable wretchedness, will become the chief, if not the sole, theme of poetry. . . . I do not fear that the poetry of democratic nations will prove insipid or that it will fly too near the ground. I rather apprehend that it will be forever losing itself in the clouds and that it will range at last to purely imaginary regions. I fear that the productions of democratic poets may often be surcharged with immense and incoherent imagery, with exaggerated descriptions and strange creations; and that the fantastic beings of their brain may sometimes make us regret the world of reality.'

If one compares Americans with Europeans, those, that is, who grew up before the ruin of Europe, one might say, crudely and too tidily, that the mediocre American is possessed by the Present and the mediocre European is possessed by the Past. The task of overcoming mediocrity, that is of learning to possess instead of being possessed is thus different in each case, for the American has to make the Present *his* present, and the European the Past *his* past. There are two ways of taking possession of the Present: one is with the help of the Comic or Ironic spirit. Hence the superiority of American (and Yiddish) humour. Compared with *The New Yorker*, how insufferably stuffy and provincial the comic papers of all other countries, even France, appear, and, politically and religiously, how incorrigibly shallow and naïve. The other way is to Choose a Past, *i.e.* to go physically or in the spirit to Europe. James's own explanation of his migration—'To make so much money that you won't, that you don't "mind", don't mind anything—that is absolutely, I think, the main American formula. Thus your making no money—or so little that it passes there for none—and being thereby distinctly reduced to minding, amounts to your being reduced to the knowledge that America is no place for you. . . . The withdrawal of the considerable group of the pecuniarily disqualified seems, for the present, an assured movement; there will always be scattered individuals condemned to mind on a scale beyond any scale of making—' seems to me only partly true; better T. S. Eliot's observation in his essay on James: 'It is the final consummation of an American to become, not an Englishman, but a European—something no born European, no person of European nationality can become.'

It is from American critics like James and Eliot that we Europeans have learned to understand our social and literary traditions in a way we could never have learned by ourselves, for they, with natural ease, look at our past, as it is extremely difficult for us to look, with contemporary eyes. Eliot's criticism of Milton, for example, may be unjustified, but only an American could have made it in such a way that it deserves serious consideration from lovers of Milton; an Englishman might have criticized him, but it would have been for some personal reason, like annoying his father.

It is harder for an American than it is for a European to become a good writer, but if he succeeds, he contributes something unique; he sees something and says it in a way that no one before him has said it. Think of the important American writers of the past—Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Henry Adams, Henry James—or of any group of contemporary American poets—Eliot, Frost, Marianne Moore, Cummings, Wallace Stevens, Laura Riding—could any European country (except, possibly, Germany) produce writers who in subject-matter, temperament, language, are so utterly unlike one another or anybody else? (Blake and Hopkins are the only English poets I can think of who might have been Americans.) Further, without mentioning names, is there any country where discipleship is attended by such disastrously banal results, in contrast to Europe where apprenticeship is the normal and fruitful state for the beginner?

The great danger for the young American writer is impatience. A wise uncle would advise him thus: 'Publish nothing before you are thirty but study, absorb, experiment. Take at least three years over every book. Be very careful about your health and lead a life as regular as a commuter's. Above all, do not write your autobiography, for your childhood is literally the whole of your capital.'

The great danger for the European writer on the other hand is, or rather was, indolence. (For the present and future, as the novels of Kafka testify, his situation is probably to be the 'American' one.) It was easier for him to write fairly well, but much harder to write as well as he possibly could, because he was a cultural *rentier*. His problem was how to possess the past, to do which he had to choose a present, and he was always tempted to think that rebellion against the past was such a choice, which it was not, for the rebel is a mirror image of the conformist. He had in fact to

become by art what the American writer is by nature, *isolated*, and perhaps the only advice as to how to achieve this that *his* wise uncle could have given was: 'Get out, or get drunk, or get ill'.

James wrote a short story, 'The Great Good Place', which has been praised by Mr. Fadiman and condemned by Mr. Matthiessen, in both instances, I think, for the wrong reason, for both take it literally. The former says, 'The Place is what our civilization could be. . . . It is a hotel without noise, a club without newspapers. You even have to pay for service.' If this were true, then the latter would be quite right to complain, as he does, that it is the vulgar daydream of a rich bourgeois intellectual. I believe, however, that, in his own discreet way, James is writing a religious parable, that is, he is not describing some social utopia, but a spiritual state which is achievable by the individual now, that the club is a symbol of this state, not its cause, and the money a symbol of the sacrifice and suffering demanded to attain and preserve it. Anyway, the story contains a passage of dialogue which seems relevant to *The American Scene*. "Every man must arrive by himself and on his own feet—isn't that so? We're Brothers here for the time as in a great monastery, and we immediately think of each other and recognize each other as such: but we must have first got here as we can, and we meet after long journeys by complicated ways."

"Where is it?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if it were much nearer than one ever suspected."

"Nearer 'town', do you mean?"

"Nearer everything—nearer everyone."

Yes. Nearer everything. Nearer than James himself, perhaps, suspected, to the 'hereditary thinness' of the American Margin, to 'the packed and hoisted basket' and 'the torture rooms of the living idiom', nearer to the unspeakable juke-boxes, the horrible Rockettes and the insane salads, nearer to the anonymous countryside littered with heterogeneous *dreck* and the synonymous cities besotted with electric signs, nearer to radio commercials and congressional oratory and Hollywood Christianity, nearer to all the 'democratic' lusts and licences, without which, perhaps, the analyst and the immigrant alike would never understand by contrast the nature of the Good Place nor desire it with sufficient desperation to stand a chance of arriving.

JOHN RUSSELL

LYTTON STRACHEY

CURIOUS things happen when a good writer dies. Those who have valued his work feel that a part of themselves has been dismantled; and, for other writers at least, small comfort is to be had from Newman's reflection that 'as time goes on, and more and more Saints are gathered in, fewer are needed on earth'. As for the suffrage of general readers, it would seem that this, like the blood of the Bourbons, has some difficulty in coagulating. Lytton Strachey at any rate is a case in point; he died in 1932, and fell at once into a deep trough of disregard, from which nobody hitherto has decisively rescued him. Yet one need only go thoroughly into the history of his talent and his enthusiasms to grasp that for those who prize the humane traditions of England and France, he is an indispensable friend and monitor.

The facts of his appearance, at least, are not a matter for conjecture. His face has been fixed for us in Mr. Henry Lamb's portrait, in a good photograph, and in the first lines of a lecture by Sir Max Beerbohm. A French witness, Jacques-Emile Blanche, could also be called; but his testimony has an un-French looseness of allusion. Lytton Strachey, himself a French scholar of high accomplishment, would surely have been startled to find himself described as 'ageless like those presenting gifts to some saint, as shown in the altar-pieces of Memling, Van Eyck or Bouts'. We can at best ascribe to Blanche a certain authority in respect of the nether parts of his subject; 'there he sat back,' he records, 'crumpled up in a low arm-chair, his long, lanky legs tightly pressed together, his knees on a level with his head, his transparent hands resting on his baggy trousers'. We who did not know Lytton Strachey can verify this from Mr. Lamb's portrait; and from a bust by Stephen Tomlin we can glimpse the sudden grandeurs, the power of passionate affirmation which resided within so freakish an envelope. Beards however are dogmatic ornaments, much prized by sculptors; and for double security we must go back to the Rede Lecture for a glance at this 'emaciated face of ivory whiteness, above a long, square-cut auburn beard, and below a head of very long sleek dark brown hair. The nose

was nothing if not aquiline, and Nature had chiselled it with great delicacy. The eyes, behind a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, eyes of an inquirer and a cogitator, were large and brown and luminous.'

Strachey's looks are important because this idiosyncrasy of person takes its final colour from an idiosyncrasy of mind. Neither is likely to recur; and if today, fifteen years after his death, there seems no general disposition to regret this, it may be due in part to his intermediary station, midway between history and art. We know what to expect when the great historians of the nineteenth century become themselves a part of history. Their rendezvous is with Dr. G. P. Gooch, whose hand, like that of a country grocer, is never far from his scales and balances. Strachey came too late for this. He could not even be said to have closed (or perhaps opened) the age of the amateur, since J. A. Froude had won some such title nearly fifty years earlier; and though he was, as much as Gibbon or Grote, a dedicated professional, he might not at first have appeared in this light. His choice of sources, for instance, could not have pleased the tribunal. Where Stubbs had spent his school holidays deciphering rolls in the Court House at Knaresborough, Strachey made notes from Greville and de Catt; where Motley had toiled among 'black-letter folios in half a dozen languages, dark, grimy and cheerless as coal-pits', Strachey was confessedly, indeed exultantly happier with Sainte-Beuve and Saint-Simon. Then again, there would have emerged a grave conflict of ultimate intentions. Ever since Gibbon launched his last impieties from the terraces of Lausanne, English historians have striven to put things back as they had been before. In 1866 Stubbs had proclaimed that 'the study of modern history is, next to theology itself, the most thoroughly religious training the mind can receive'. Religion appeared to Strachey in the guise of a fantastic and comical deformity, and he opposed to it a lucid pessimism, an undistressed acceptance of what, in his first published essay, he called 'the whole dismal fatality of things'. Agnostics of the previous generation had bequeathed to the squares of Bloomsbury a legacy of honest and tormented doubt from which these plane-shaded retreats have still to recover; but one could say of Lytton Strachey what a French critic has written of Bayle—'*Il n'accuse pas Dieu; il l'embarrasse*'. And then perhaps Strachey would not, after all,

have wished for a place in Dr. Gooch's ghostly Academy. Its members appeared to him too exclusively in the light of a first disenchantment. The patient carpentry, for instance, of Professor Gardiner seemed to him to have resulted in 'nothing so much as a very large heap of sawdust'. Carlyle had really too much genius, of an uncouth, fumiferous sort; Acton was dismissed with a single temerarious glance, as 'a historian to whom learning and judgement had not been granted in equal proportions'; Macaulay wrote in a style which, 'with its metallic exactness and its fatal efficiency, was certainly one of the most remarkable products of the Industrial Revolution'. Besides, by 1910 the Elysian common-room was already over-crowded, and one corner of it, sacred to Mommsen, Nitzschmann, Knöpfler and Hopf, was thick with the smoke of German cigars; and in front of the fire, what could be seen? Carlyle opening a fresh packet of blue pills, Mandell Creighton gripping his black bag firmly between his gaiters, and stroking a beard more suited to Mount Athos than to Paradise, and Freeman handing round picture postcards of Coutances and Le Mans. Lytton Strachey would not have been happy in such a room; and indeed his whole view of history, and the place assumed by history in his mental and emotional economy, proved him to differ entirely from the masters of an earlier generation.

History, for Lytton Strachey, was a series of *tête-à-têtes* with chosen persons—a thing not so much written as talked over; and from the record of his talks one can picture the outward and inward parts, the hide and the heart, not only of his subjects but also of their interlocutor. Strachey is in fact the great *intimiste* among historians. Other writers have used portraits to give pause to their narratives; but with Strachey the narrative is all portrait, and if we look into the eyes of his Voltaire or, more surprisingly, of his Prince Consort, we seem to see, reflected in their pupils, the gaze of their bland inquisitor. All the other facts of history are dimmed and thrust backward by this intense and continuous scrutiny of individuals. Such was the fixity of his regard that the great public events of history often take at best a tertiary place, much as in Reynolds' *Lord Heathfield* the emphasis is all on the sitter's massive person, and on the salt meat of his visage, while the forgotten snouts of his artillery are left to point right and left in the distance. Of course many curiosities are lost in this way, and

collectively minded readers may resent the neglect of those grand impersonal themes to whose evolution so many of our current discomforts are ultimately due. Moreover, Lytton Strachey, for all his love of detachment, was not an objective writer; he was, if anything, a soliloquist who happened to explain himself best through the study of history and literature; he was also, as it happened, a profoundly romantic writer, but one whose romance was with the classical ages of European civilization, and whose style was governed by their canons.

For such a writer, biography was the best form of historical writing; but here again there has to be a narrowing of fields. How willingly would we now see a revival of the heavyweight biographical tradition of Lord Morley, Sir Theodore Martin, Lady Gwendoline Cecil, Mr. Money Penny and Mr. Buckle! Admittedly it is often low-water in their works; and there are chapters in which the lunar pull of the incoming tide seems altogether suspended; but at such times a wise student will know where best to go winking, and if he plies his hook with skill he will always be rewarded. In place of these vast creations, with their grave monotony, their purposeful denial of art, we have now for the most part wretched collations of personal opinion and taste. For this Lytton Strachey is largely responsible. His precepts were too provoking, and his example too contagious, for the old method to survive. The result is that with every year irreplaceable persons vanish or die, and only rarely is it thought worth while to publish in full the papers on which future historians will depend. Biographers may no longer acknowledge that a great part of life is inevitably dull; as for readers, their whims are assumed to be as extreme as those of Sardanapalus, and their attitude that of Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*: 'I can read poetry and plays, but history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in'.

Lytton Strachey set out to remedy the lack, as he saw it, of any English counterpart to the great short biographers of France—'the Fontenelles and Condorcets, with their incomparable *éloges*, compressing into a few shining pages the manifold existences of men'. This he considered 'the most delicate and humane of all the branches of the art of writing'. While conceding a certain grandeur to this tribute, one must assert that, on the contrary, the art of Fontenelle and Condorcet does find its parallel in English,

and that moreover Lytton Strachey's work is really not very like the *éloges* to which he has offered so personal a wreath. We have, after all, our masters, if not precisely of the *éloge*, at any rate of the prose portrait. The masterpieces of Clarendon, Halifax, Burnet and Sir Philip Warwick were not composed with any concerted intention; but together they make a body of portraits which need fear no comparison. Sir Henry Savile's Tacitus gave to these fine writers an ideal image of history as it can be written by contemporaries. Where Sir Walter Raleigh had drawn back, observing only that 'whosoever in writing a modern History shall follow truth too near the heels, it may happily strike out his teeth', a later brood of memorialists rushed in gladly to describe their own most momentous experiences with something of the powerful concision of their Latin master. Lytton Strachey admitted to the beauty of the portraits with whose composition Clarendon had consoled himself during his exile at Montpellier; and he must have felt some kinship with Clarendon's passionate and pragmatistical curiosity about human beings. At any rate he pauses in his essay on Macaulay to remark 'with what a gorgeous sinuosity, with what a grandiose delicacy, the older master elaborates, through his enormous sentences, the lineaments of a soul!' Clarendon drew upon a vast magazine of public experience; but there is room also, in literature, for the gossip. The Creeveys and the Grevilles descend from Aubrey as clearly as Clarendon from Tacitus; and in his later years Lytton Strachey so far amended his former exclusive taste as to admit that Aubrey gives us 'the pure essentials—a vivid image, on a page or two, without explanations, transitions, commentaries, or padding'. The undress of Aubrey and the majesty of Clarendon fortify the English language at one of its greatest moments, and a memorialist need look no further for his emblems of excellence than to these two or three English decades.

Fontenelle so ennobled his routine duties as secretary of the Académie des Sciences that his annual labours became the delight of Pekin and the preferred ornament, it would seem, of the Peruvian alcove. Instruction, in these *éloges*, takes hands with delight; and I need hardly stress the virtuosity, discreet but imposing, with which Fontenelle contrived that a lingering charm should attach, even today, to the pneumatic devices of Homberg or the riparian studies of Guglielmini. Nor should one underrate

the intellectual power which hums in the distance behind the obituarist's easy command of so many refractory subjects. One needs however no special knowledge to sense the supreme virtue of Fontenelle—the perfection of balance which allowed him to adopt the motto 'Justice et Justesse'. This harmony of language and proportion enhances truth; but not all of his contemporaries admired the Stracheyesque assurance of touch with which Fontenelle varied the tone of the *éloges*. It was permissible to say that Leibnitz knew much of Virgil by heart, and even that for weeks together he ate, slept and evacuated at his desk—'pratique', Fontenelle noted, 'fort propre à avancer beaucoup un travail, mais fort malsaine'. Sometimes, however, the ironic peppercorns were spread rather too thickly—as when Ozanam was disclosed as an habitual gambler, and La Faye as the least bit of a snob. Lytton Strachey must have enjoyed the just perceptible malice with which Fontenelle records Malebranche's love of washing his lower parts, and the fact that, before settling to his devotions, he took care to shut and bolt all his windows. Yet these strokes do not disturb the formal glaze of the *éloges*, whose final impression is one of disinterested roundness and sustained elevation of outlook. Strachey may well have felt especial sympathy for Fontenelle who, like himself, was an enthusiastic and unplayable dramatist. He may also have saluted in him an enveloping mastery of all branches of science, such as his own father, Sir Richard Strachey, was one of the last Englishmen to possess; and, as much as anything, he must have prized him for the qualities which he discerned in the *Histoire des Oracles*—the 'mingling of the sprightly and the erudite, and the subdued irony of an apparent submission to orthodoxy'. These, at any rate, are the traits which he carried over intact into his own work.

Lytton Strachey first came to general notice in 1918, when he published *Eminent Victorians*. Four years later, *Queen Victoria* confirmed his popularity among a wide class of readers. Most of these saw him mainly as an iconoclast who made delightful fun of a period whose true nature they were too indolent to discern. It is still only rarely acknowledged that Lytton Strachey did not regard the Victorian age with the eye of a superior person; nor did he speak, as has been so often asserted, with the voice of a 'cynical and beliefless generation'. He was himself a Victorian, in so far as the years of his minority were also the last twenty-one

years of the Queen's life; and his family was, to the last degree, both eminent and Victorian. The sublime energies of the age coursed through their veins in a strength which now appears that of an extinct and superior race; they were large and generous beings, rough-cast in the giant moulds of the period. Lytton Strachey's childhood was an exceptionally free and happy one. Himself was too delicate for the rigours of ordinary school-life, and his boyhood was diversified by such unusual experiences as the voyage which he made, at the age of ten, to Egypt. Being of Scottish descent on his mother's side, he travelled in a diminutive variant of Highland costume, and did not fail to evoke favourable comment from the officers and men of the Black Watch with whom much of the voyage was perforce spent. It is agreeable to picture the kilted nursling as, enraptured by his first sight of the Middle East, he returned the gaze of the Sphinx; the memory of this confrontation may have prompted him to write, some sixteen years later, in an essay on Sir Thomas Browne, that 'it would be pleasant . . . to get by heart a chapter of the *Christian Morals* between the paws of a Sphinx'. Later, as he rounded the Cape of Good Hope in a troopship, his gift for treating grown-up persons as equals caused him to be made the hero, when England was in sight, of a farewell dinner. It was easy for the rufous confidant of Huxley and Darwin to find his vocation as a writer. Joint compositions were a favourite pastime among his family; Lady Strachey had moreover a great and, for the period, an original devotion to the Elizabethan dramatists, from whom she read aloud with the energy and persistence which other mothers reserve for mindless trivialities. Lytton Strachey's father and mother, for all their numberless occupations, had that readiness to be disturbed which is the mark of a good parent. Sir Richard Strachey was sixty-three at the time of Lytton Strachey's birth, and his children still recall the sheaves of paper, the voluminous sheets each covered with elaborate calculations, which to the last encumbered their father's desk. His life overlapped that of his Queen at both ends, and he lived to be ninety-one. He was omnicaacious. As a Royal Engineer he distinguished himself in action at Aliwal. Before he was forty he had explored unknown regions in the Himalayas, west of Nepal, and had ventured into Tibet as far as lakes Rakas-Tal and Manasarowar. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he was twice the Society's Vice-President. He laid

out the railway station at Allahabad. He was Minister of Public Works in India. He was President of the Royal Geographical Society; and as a member of the Managing Committee of Kew Gardens he was able to take his son Lytton to see the ingenious and patiently evolved blooms whose human counterparts were to be Lytton's favourite study. Lytton Strachey had other formidable connections. One, a friend of Carlyle and disciple of F. D. Maurice, achieved what now seems the archetype of laborious erudition; he published in a quarto volume the English translation of a treatise on algebra which, originally in Sanskrit, had been successively adapted for Hindu readers, re-translated into Persian, and thence transposed into the English of 1840. He wrote an introduction to Edward Lear's poems, a memoir of Peacock and a history of 'Hebrew Politics in the Age of Sargan and Sennacherib'. Carlyle's description of him as 'a little, bustling, logic-chopping, good-hearted, frank fellow' may not, in fact, be exhaustive. The Anglo-Indian cast of the Stracheys was followed by a younger uncle who, while Finance Minister to three successive Viceroys, fostered a measure for the introduction of metrical weights and measures throughout India. This Trollopian edict was never put into effect, however, and its initiator later became a philosophic Radical after the style of Mill; as a retired Englishman in Florence, he became an ardent supporter of Garibaldi. Lytton Strachey could look beyond his Victorian forbears for literary associations, for an earlier Strachey had been the neighbour and confidant of Locke; but he grew up, as will have been seen, among men and women who embodied an age as vigorous and as capable as any in English history.

The strain of the orientalist still persists in the Stracheys. In Lytton Strachey's published work, it appears mainly in his fondness for the memoirs of Li Hung-Chang; but in his first long composition, a thesis on Warren Hastings which he wrote while at Cambridge, he treated a subject long dear to Stracheys; and in an unpublished play, *Son of Heaven*, he turned for his scene to China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion. Behind the two volumes of Victorian studies lie other unsuspected stretches of warm feeling. Victorians appeared to him as either sheep or goats, and it is our misfortune that most of his sheep were never brought into the fold. Sometimes, like Newman, they are allowed to peer tearfully over vicarage gates; but more often (as with the

projected life of Darwin) they are never heard of at all. Nor could one infer from Strachey's handling of 'Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands', that he had spent some of his happiest days at the foot of the Cairngorms. Certainly he never learnt his Queen's lesson of 'resignation and faith' from the 'simple mountaineers' whom he met in the Highlands. If, indeed, the essays in *Eminent Victorians* are studies in disveneration, it is upon faith that the whole question turns. The Victorians stood in polar opposition, as we shall see, to the qualities, the vanished perfections which Lytton Strachey prized as the best emblem of our race; yet in everything but their religion he could measure and weigh their great virtues. The son of a great engineer, he could beautifully dismantle the gleaming machinery of Manning's mind; all Morley's volumes cannot better Strachey's brief analysis of Gladstone. From his student days at Liverpool, he could recall such shocking vistas of poverty and injustice as well fitted him to describe the dedicated life of Miss Nightingale. But as for the religion which gave such persons a fourth dimension of their own—decidedly he could not swallow it. A frontal attack would not serve his purpose; to the detached irony of Bayle he added a weapon forged by Gibbon—that of the verbal delicacy with which the earlier master had 'carved his enemy as a dish fit for the Gods'. Thus Manning's crucial interview with Miss Bevan (in which she suggested to the young man, whom she knew to be eaten away with pride, that heavenly ambitions were not closed against him) is prefaced with the fatal words: 'one day, as they walked together in the shrubbery'. In the shrubbery! The word conjures up all the reeking evergreens which are the very Antipodes of the heart-straining dilemmas of youth. Often a single word betrays the reefs which lie beneath our smooth-running keel—as when the passage of certain holy relics from Palestine to Loreto is said to have been effected 'in three hops'. Strachey presents the facts of belief with the skill bred into a family of gifted administrators; but his minute is always a hostile one.

Manning was an excellent choice for the first Victorian victim. For one thing, his life invites the fullest indulgence in the kind of narrative for which Lytton Strachey had a nearly maniacal fondness—the notation of personal intrigue. Those who consider him a flimsy or a facile writer should compare the aerial texture of his essay with the confused and conflicting darknesses of the original

sources; only then will they grasp with what classical art Lytton Strachey has imposed upon the involutions of theological intrigue the darling qualities of order, lucidity, balance and precision. The portraits in *Eminent Victorians*, like the six versions of Gibbon's autobiography, are exercises on the theme of scale—'always', in Lytton Strachey's view, 'one of the major difficulties in literary composition'—and it is possible, while yielding none of one's delight in the narrative itself, to regret that some of the picture goes by default. Lytton Strachey himself allows that, in the deadly combat between Manning and Errington, where the highest and the best both in Rome and in Westminster were pitted against one another like champion cocks, 'it is only possible to discern with clearness, amid a vast cloud of official documents and unofficial correspondences in English, Italian and Latin, of Papal decrees and voluminous *scrittura*, of confidential reports of episcopal whispers and the secret agitations of Cardinals, the form of Manning, restless and indomitable, scouring like a stormy petrel the angry ocean of debate'. No Strachey in Victorian India had kept a clearer head than this youthful Strachey, pole-vaulted into the arcana of Victorian Rome. He could have afforded, in fact, some moments of romance in the secondary parts of his story; and some touches, by their luminous vagueness, their credulous capitals, do indeed recall Virginia Woolf's pictures of life among great persons—as when he says that 'the fate of the Church was decided . . . by little knots of influential persons meeting quietly of a morning in the back room of some inconspicuous lodging-house, by a sunset rendezvous in the Borghese Gardens between a Cardinal and a Diplomatist, by a whispered conference in an alcove at a Princess's evening Party . . .' Reference, however, to Manning's own account of the Œcumenical Council will show how exact was Lytton Strachey's picture. He was at his ease in the Rome of 1870. The North Transept of St. Peter's, with its row beyond row of seats padded with Brussels carpet, was as familiar to him—perhaps more familiar, indeed—as Christ Church, Woburn Square. Acton, Gladstone, and Manning were antagonists after his own heart; in the face of so tremendous a clash, such trifles as the egregious indiscretion of Mr. Alfred Austin could be omitted. And just as, when one first sights the vast hummocks of Delphi, it seems improbable that within this dried rusk of a landscape there should reside the

gaseous magic of the Sibyls, so it is difficult at first to detect in the Vatican Council the free play of what Anglicans are pleased to call 'true religious feeling'. Manning's own great speech of 25 May 1870 was built up, as he tells us himself, as much by 'copious quotation from *The Times*, *Pall Mall* and *Standard*' as from the perfunctory doctrinal allusions with which he began. Arguably, Manning at this time was Strachey's 'superstitious egoist' incarnate; but Lytton Strachey, who loved to see history in terms of intrigue, and intrigue in terms of single combat, may have foreshortened the real portent, not only of the Vatican Council, but also of the Oxford Movement. In detailing the physical aspect of Rome, and its ever-reliable charge of wonder and surprise, he did not forget 'the reverse side of the Papal dispensation—the nauseating filth of the highways, the cattle stabled in the palaces of the great, and the fever flitting through the ghastly tenements of the poor'. He found it harder to allow that the Œcumenical Council was debating about something real, something about which big men could reasonably differ to the point at which, as Gladstone wrote to Manning, 'My rudimentary perceptions seem to differ from yours. Nature has made a mistake in one or the other of us.' Their disputes exist in climates of the imagination, and at times of language, which are now remote from current experience. Manning has also certain traits which, to a self-conscious age, seem comical and archaic; more exactly, our conventions require them to be placed in a political context, and not a religious one. The day of Garibaldi's entrance into Rome, for instance, was a terrible one for Manning; but when he laments to Gladstone that 'Protestant Bibles, bad books and pictures, and a translation of *Lothair* were sold in the streets a few hours after the capitulation', then surely one's sympathy must sag a little. Then again, Manning's lines on the possibility of martyrdom strike, in their way, a moving note in a lifetime of tireless but relatively unimperilled activity; but they are less affecting when one finds that they were written during a phase of depression at his diminished political power at Rome—a phase summarized in a memorandum whose opening paragraph runs 'First, I was really ill, which always does me good'. Manning would however have struck back most powerfully at Lytton Strachey and his friends; he was never backward in debate, and discounted even Huxley and Darwin as 'intellectual pollards' or 'stunted trees walking';

even Reuter's seemed to him 'as changeable as Proteus, and as little bound to truth'. Politically he was an undestructive Radical, and in the contrast between his tolerance and the chain-armour Toryism of many Tractarians there is a greater curiosity than might be inferred from *Eminent Victorians*.

Every generation has its Hurrell Froude—'a man . . . of whom it is impossible for those who have known him to speak without exceeding the bounds of common admiration and affection'. Often it would be wiser for his contemporaries to keep inviolate the image of their distant paragon. Their pieties may otherwise merely vex and irritate those who, not having known the nonpareil, may suspect the mourners of wishing, by reflection, to embellish themselves. Regret for the dead has always, after all, an element of regret for one's own lost opportunities. Hurrell Froude's *Remains* are certainly very curious reading, and we can do little more in 1947 than run our fingers through the strings of his derelict harp. All the same one could not suppose, from Strachey's dislusted portrait, that Hurrell Froude was a man of violent activity, a fearless sailor of small boats and a rider who urged his maddened horse at full gallop beneath the ancient oaks in Blenheim Park. One Froude is there, plain enough—the Froude who begged the Fellows of Oriel to give up wine in the Senior Common Room on the ground that 'as they had already had a glass or two at High Table, they did not require any more'; but the deuterio-Froude is lacking—the poor man who gave up his college emoluments to help balance the Tractarian budget, and the architectural theorist who at first preferred Cologne Cathedral to the Parthenon, and later, in Barbados, designed 'some homely Tuscan additions' to Codrington College. Quintessentially Froude was an old Tory, with an old Tory's 'transcendental idea of the English gentleman'. He and his friends were not merely freaks who believed in 'a large amount of miraculous interference in the early and middle ages'. They were also men up in arms against the new heresy of democracy. Froude once wrote to Newman, in that over-excited style to which historical studies always exalted him, and remarked 'how Whiggery has by degrees taken up all the filth that has been secreted in the fermentation of human thought!' Not long after, when Pius IX had decided to restore the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, a

Whig Prime Minister wrote to his Sovereign in terms which might have confirmed Hurrell Froude in his view. 'The matter to create rational alarm', said Lord John Russell, 'is the growth of Roman Catholic doctrines and practices within the (Anglican) Church. Dr. Arnold said very truly "I look upon a Roman Catholic as an enemy in his uniform; I look upon a Tractarian as an enemy disguised as a spy".'

One might also regret Lytton Strachey's neglect of that prime Tractarian lubricant—the phenomenal warmth and generosity of feeling which sustained the members of the Movement in their personal relations. Faber called this, with all the delicacy of his age, 'a revival of chivalry in male friendship'; and in this regard, Froude himself needed all his gifts of allusion. Once, in a footnote to his poems, he found, for his personal situation, a Virgilian analogy to which André Gide has since given the sharpest and most dogmatic of points. Corydon had not then so clear a meaning; and the ingenious pun which he lifted from the *Medea* may express more truly the passionate celibacy to which he and Newman aspired:

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ δὴ φροῦδος εἰμι παρ' ἐγώ.

'As for my name continuing into posterity—in that respect I am clean gone.' Faber's fondness for his Greek servant, Froude's agony before his thoughts of an unnamed undergraduate pupil, and Newman's surrender to the dying embrace of Father St. John—these incidents, of which Mr. Geoffrey Faber gives an absorbing if rather tremulous account in his *Oxford Apostles*, were no more than the garnish of circumstance. The Movement embraced or perturbed sensitive minds of all types, from Gladstone's steam-hammer procedures to the exquisite agitations of Aubrey de Vere. One has only to read of Gladstone 'staggering to and fro like a drunken man' after reading Newman's letters in 1845, or 'growing hot' when the topic was raised during breakfast with Macaulay, to realize that the Movement was the work, not of ambitious cranks, but of men who strove, in the midstream of Victorian life, to maintain an Athenian largeness of personal sympathy throughout a controversy in which all that they most valued—honour, faith, and the hope of eternity—was in peril.

Readers more learned than I can no doubt detect other disputable points in *Eminent Victorians*. In the *Spectator* for 7 January 1944, Mr. F. A. Simpson drove a coach-and-pair through one of

the most specious of the attacks upon Manning; and Mrs. Humphrey Ward considered the portrait of her grandfather, Dr. Arnold, as a mere 'eidôlon . . . one proof the more of the ease with which a certain kind of ability outwits itself'. But posterity has tended to dissent from her view, and not to complain very much, moreover, that in the essay on Gordon the portrait of Sir Evelyn Baring most ungenerously traduces a public servant whose views and actions were the very opposite of those imputed to him. Perhaps, too, one should blame this error to the difficulty of maintaining Mr. Gladstone in those satanic postures which Lytton Strachey devised for him. Mr. Bernard M. Allen's *Gordon and the Sudan* gives some cautionary instances of the way in which credulity and inattention can destroy the integrity of a narrative; nor does one need to be a Bible-eating Buxton to descry, in Gordon's letters and journals, a boisterous and ironical nature very different from the half-crazy evangelist who stalks and gibbers through the pages of *Eminent Victorians*.

In his first book of historical studies, Lytton Strachey went all out for the supreme moments of personal intrigue—the Elizabethan moments, one might say, in the darkened conservatory of the Victorian age. Manning's efforts to dish Newman, and Gladstone's to dish Gordon, appear in a light which Webster himself could not have bettered. In the lavendered pages of *Queen Victoria*, a more temperate régime prevails, and the interiors have the fresh scarlet enamel of a conversazione by Zoffany. The beauties of this book are obvious to anyone with eyes to read it and an ear to mark its never-flagging variety of mode and cadence. The truths are those of intimacy, rather than of public record, and sometimes they are those of drama rather than of anatomy; but the book is a work of art, and one which gave a nudge to public opinion—a short, hard shove from which that malleable factor has yet to recover. Our senior delicate urged his Cambridge audience, in the Rede lecture on Lytton Strachey, to 'consider the differences between his ways of writing about Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone. His manner seems to bring us into the presence of those widely disparate Premiers. Note the mellow and leisurely benignity of the cadences in which he writes of Lord Melbourne—"the autumn rose", as he called him. Note the sharp brisk straightforward buoyancy of the writing whenever Lord Palmerston appears; and the elaborate

Oriental richness of manner when Mr. Disraeli is on the scene.' And Sir Max Beerbohm goes on to remark the prodigies of mischievous penetration to which Lytton Strachey was always excited by the monstrous, the excessive, the hardly credible idea of Mr. Gladstone. This Phoenix among lecturers omitted, however, one cardinal point—that only once before, within living memory, had such restorative art been applied to a subject from recent history; and some of his listeners may have remembered for a moment an essay on George IV, published in 1896, as part of the Works of Max Beerbohm.

The unabused intimacy of *Queen Victoria* is something which none of Lytton Strachey's followers can hope to recapture. The width and depth of his reading are easily lost to view behind the dissembling and nonchalant mask of the classical artist; and sometimes, when the touch has an almost unnerving lightness, one is reminded of his handling of the crisis of policy which Palmerston averted, in 1850, by 'a speech of over four hours, in which exposition, invective, argument, declamation, plain talk, and resounding eloquence were mingled together with consummate art and extraordinary felicity'. One just might not guess from this that Palmerston, so far from improvising his reply, had sealed and caulked it against all opposition by reference, during its preparation, to over two thousand separate volumes of Foreign Office papers. Strachey's own compositions, with their beautiful and deceptive fluency, had just such a strenuous preface of unmentioned preliminary reading; and it sometimes happened that projects were meditated—lives, for instance, of Nelson, St. Paul and Jesus Christ—and dropped only after careful reading had shown them to be unsuitable. Few writers of his time had either Strachey's intellectual heritage or his power of intensive, if intermittent application. Nor could they hope to rival him in a technical feat which always gave him great pleasure—the reproduction of the *glissades* of the unconscious mind. This procedure, so skilfully grafted by Virginia Woolf onto the rude structure of the novel of incident, was applied by Lytton Strachey, one of her closest friends, with considerable tact and discretion. Disastrous in the hands of others, it became for him a weapon of peculiar precision. The famous diminuendo with which he ends *Queen Victoria* was recently picked out by Mr. E. M. Forster as one of the most accomplished pages of the century; and I should like

to quote here a shorter, but not less Woolfian instance. The Queen is looking back along the flowery *tonnelle* of her day at the Great Exhibition. ' . . . Her remembering pen rushed on, regardless, from splendour to splendour,—the huge crowds so well-behaved and loyal—flags of all the nations floating—the inside of the building, so immense, with myriads of people and the sun shining through the roof—a little side-room where we left our shawls—palm trees and machinery—dear Albert—the place so big that we could hardly hear the organ—thankfulness to God—a curious assemblage of political and distinguished men—the March from *Athalie*—God bless my dearest Albert, God bless my dearest country!—a glass fountain—the Duke and Lord Anglesey walking arm in arm—a beautiful Amazon, in bronze, by Kiss—Mr. Paxton, who might be justly proud, and rose from being a common gardener's boy—Sir George Grey in tears, and everybody astonished and delighted.'

Lytton Strachey was preoccupied with the Victorian age, but he was not obsessed with it. Other periods appeared to him in more congenial guise, but they did not call for any sustained effort of comprehension. A profound though rarely explicit respect for science once caused him to name 15 July 1662 as the date of the beginning of the modern world, 'for on that day the Royal Society was founded, and the place of Science in civilization became a definite and recognized thing'. Newton was a great hero in Lytton Strachey's Pantheon, and the Newtonian age, being also that of Walpole and Carteret, of Butler and Berkeley, of Swift and of Pope, seemed to him the glad apex of English civilization. 'Never', he thought, 'had the national qualities of solidity and sense, independence of judgement and idiosyncrasy of temperament, received a more forcible and complete expression.' It was the age at once of *Gulliver's Travels* and of *The Dunciad*. Lytton Strachey looked back, in 1919, to this period, and found that in essentials 'it was not very far distant from the Renaissance'. But there was another period which had its fascination, and in his forties Lytton Strachey decided to break new ground and write the story of Elizabeth and Essex. Perhaps, like a minor personage in Tennyson's *Queen Mary*, he felt the longing to

— fly

These bald, blank fields and dance into the sun
That shines on princes.

By ill fortune this transitional book, the history of an excursion across the natural frontiers of his mind, turned out to be Strachey's last work of any length, and it may give quite falsely the idea of a talent in some degree *égaré*; the narrative style is that of an inverted and chastened Carlyle, the *glissades* are not under perfect control, and the degree of intrigue, and its continuity and coherence, are exceptional even for a Strachey history. With Bacon, moreover, Strachey maintained a personal and ungenerous feud of the kind which both Hume and Fontenelle (the two historians whose detached elevation he especially admired) would have been quick to repudiate. Yet *Elizabeth and Essex* is at times a beautiful aberration, and it contains at least one memorable sentence—the last moments of Philip II of Spain: 'and so', Lytton Strachey writes, 'in ecstasy and in torment, in absurdity and in greatness, happy, miserable, horrible, and holy, King Philip went off, to meet the Trinity'.

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Recurrently there stands before the inward eye of man the image of some vanished felicity. These emblems of perfection vary of course from one generation to the next; the marbles of Pheidias give way to panels by Giorgione; the giants of Italy yield their place to those of France; and up on to the pedestal vacated by Wagner there mounts at this moment the dear, disconcerted wraith of Gabriel Fauré. These, however, are figures of sublime diversion; for the civic ideal, the image of the harmonious state, men have looked for the past two hundred years to the age of the Antonines. Montesquieu says, for instance, of Antoninus Pius: 'merely to speak of this Emperor creates within oneself a secret pleasure; and one cannot read of his life without experiencing the tenderest of emotions; such is its effect, that in thinking better of mankind, one also thinks better of oneself'. For those who now lament the desipience of the world, the reign of treachery and pride, the loss of virtue and the unlightened winter of the public heart, there is a desperate fascination in this image, and in the impulse to mark, once and for all, the point at which the world went wrong. This was in fact the prime object of much of Lytton Strachey's best work; and to it all there could be fixed as a motto a sentence of Renan. 'C'est vraiment à cette date', he says of the Antonine age, 'que le monde dit adieu à la joie, traite

les muses en séductrices, ne veut plus entendre parler que de ce qui entretient sa mélancolie, se change en un vaste hôpital.' There exist, however, later islands of enlightenment—Hesperidean gardens which have vanished from the world as we know it, leaving hardly a slip or a sucker behind to mark their site. Lytton Strachey loved to seek these out, and he would perhaps have been surprised to know that his own world might one day seem to have been one of them. Certainly the first quarter of this century must already appear as a time in which, war notwithstanding, the halcyon could breed in its floating nest. For Lytton Strachey, the Antonines of north-western Europe were movable deities; but their place was filled most often by the Philosophes and the Encyclopédistes, and it was between 1750 and 1780 that the ideals of Reason and Humanity seemed to him to have been nearest to fulfilment. The amenities of a pre-revolutionary period served moreover to enhance the happiness and the ideal lucidity of those for whom revolution itself might have less agreeable features. Those of Lytton Strachey's friends who were just of age in 1905 enjoyed a similar privilege; within the still warm side of an overgrown capitalistic society they were able to cultivate precisely the fine detachment for which democracy has no use. Their objects were those of the Encyclopédistes—'to dispel', as Lytton Strachey wrote in 1911, 'the dark mass of prejudice, superstition, ignorance, and folly by the clear rays of truth'. Nor were they individually less remarkable. G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, Desmond MacCarthy and Virginia Woolf are of the calibre of Diderot, Dalember, Helvétius and Condillac; and although one need not press for exact impersonations, it is possible, for instance, that but for an overriding indolence Lytton Strachey might himself have achieved the lineaments of Voltaire. The list could be continued. Hairless and methodical, Dr. Hugh Dalton could assume Turgot's robes; and on the arm of the chair marked 'Marmontel' there might be seated the comely and bibulous figure of Mr. Clive Bell. To younger friends of Lytton Strachey we owe, for example, the permanent excellence of Shakespearian productions at Cambridge; and those fledgling authors who have been rescued from the glaciers of self-doubt by that genial St. Bernard, Mr. Raymond Mortimer, will have recognized in their shaggy saviour the transmitted warmth of a circle which, quite contrary to received

opinion, was one of exceptional strength and variety of feeling. It is one, however, which already belongs to history. Lytton Strachey is in many ways our contemporary; but when he speaks with such deprecatory care of the Elizabethan habit of torturing witnesses, declares that 'ultimately the world is governed by moderate men', or advances the cautionary hypothesis that 'the love of persecution and the hatred of heterodoxies' may not have vanished for ever from the earth, then it is time to recall that, of these statements, one is dated 1927, the other 1918 and the last 1913. Lytton Strachey's enthusiasm may now seem to have a largely literary and private character; but he and his friends wrote and worked in a world to which Victorian maps had still some relevance. In May 1917, when he had to appear before a conscientious objectors' tribunal, he made what was, for him, an unusually direct statement of his position. In the course of it he said that, before the war, 'I was principally concerned with literary and speculative matters; but, with the war, the supreme importance of international questions has been forced upon my attention. My opinions in general had been for many years strongly critical of the whole structure of society; and after a study of the diplomatic situation, and of the literature, both controversial and philosophic, arising out of the war, they developed naturally into those I now hold. My convictions as to my duty with regard to the war have not been formed either rashly or lightly; and I shall not act against these convictions, whatever the consequences may be.' He remained, nevertheless, curiously sanguine about the future. Even in 1919 he felt able to say that 'short of some overwhelming catastrophe, the doctrine which Voltaire preached—that life should be ruled, not by the dictates of tyranny and superstition, but by those of reason and humanity—can never be obliterated from the minds of men'. People did, of course, want this to be true, but they never wanted it quite enough. Strachey was of the generation for which the Industrial Revolution was the great scapegoat; and with a single phrase ('the mechanical ingenuity of a young man from Glasgow') he brought it down to his favourite level of personal intrigue. To us, the boggy lies rather in the heart than in the workshop; but even now, while men and women all over Europe have once again picked up the idea of war, and are furtively caressing it, Lytton Strachey's ideal of humanity, and

the vanished perfections of which he was the champion, are still of value, and for a few may be the thing of greatest worth.

Lytton Strachey and his friends possessed that 'humanité curieuse, savante et polie' which Anatole France took to be the central trait of a culture in which criticism, the latest in date of literary forms, might one day come to absorb all the others. Had Strachey not died at the age of fifty-two, he would now be enjoying the seventh decade of his life, and the third of his renown. In a private sense he might have become, as was Sainte-Beuve's fortune some sixty years earlier, 'the universal doctor, the St. Thomas Aquinas' of his generation. He might not have achieved this, for in a distracting and exigent epoch he lacked the foreseeing perseverance which he so much admired, for instance, in Milton; but if he had happened to succeed, the pennons of Racine and Voltaire would have streamed, I think, from his triumphal car. His French education began very early, for Mademoiselle Souvestre, a daughter of the author of *Un Philosophe Sous Les Toits*, was a great family friend; and in early childhood he formed the attachment which caused him to write, at the age of twenty-three, that 'the greatest misfortune that can happen to a witty man is to be born out of France'. In these first essays the style remains that of the brilliant undergraduate, the young man who 'has known, he believes, few happier moments than those in which he has rolled the periods of the *Hydriotaphia* out to the darkness and the nightingales through the studious cloisters of Trinity'. The classical thesis-and-antithesis of the sentences owes something to his admired friend Bertrand Russell, but there is also, for all his cavalier devotion to France, an earlier and a native ring. An essay on Johnson gives the clue; for this is an English urbanity, 'and as one reads, the brilliant sentences seem to come to one, out of the Past, with the friendliness of a conversation'. His cousin, St. Loe Strachey, helped to give his style its final shape by giving him regular work for the *Spectator*; and in 1911 H. A. L. Fisher, himself an exquisite French scholar, invited Lytton Strachey to write his *Landmarks in French Literature, 1080-1896*, for the Home University Library. Long essays on Blake, Beddoes, Browne, and the famous *Shakespeare's Final Period* had proved that his tastes were not those of a *déraciné*; his love for French writers had nothing of the listless eclecticism of the exile. He went to France for certain specific qualities which he could not find at home; in

France, where such things are not conceded easily, it was noted (at Pontigny, for instance, where he met many of the best living French writers) that Lytton Strachey had more than a visitor's knowledge of his favourite authors; and in his first book, the *Landmarks*, he initiated that habitual swivelling of eye and ear towards France which still contrives, I notice, to enrage insular persons.

Thirty-five years have passed since Lytton Strachey's *Landmarks* was first published, and inevitable shifts of taste and judgement have left his book a little out of touch with the appreciations now current among English readers. A great generation of French writers was born within a year or two of 1870; Gide, Claudel, Proust and Valéry, not less than Jouhandeau, Mauriac and Sartre, or Barrès, Péguy and Zola, have given to the post-Revolutionary end of French literature an importance which at times merges into a necessity. Then again, although Strachey's estimate of Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert is abnormally fair, these three writers have not for him the tremendous, indeed the exclusive stature which current opinion accords to them. The French nineteenth century has, after all, formed and dictated our attitude to poetry, to the novel, and even, if we are readers of Sainte-Beuve, to literature itself. Lytton Strachey's survey ends in 1896, but the names of Nerval, Mallarmé and Rimbaud are never mentioned. Such a history cannot seem to us complete, and indeed the last two sections of the book are the work of a writer who did not respond, in the inmost zone of his being, to the nineteenth century. He felt for it the solid but unkindled respect which is now usually reserved for earlier periods. From the birth of Marot to the death of Voltaire, on the other hand, Lytton Strachey is incomparably the best of English guides. The longest and most delicate noses might sniff in vain for the season of poetry to which Henri IV was patron; but on each of the great writers, on Racine, Corneille, Pascal, Molière, Saint-Simon, La Fontaine, Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Diderot and Voltaire, there are sentences which bear the print of a fine writer finely alight. 'These are the men', he seems to say, 'most fitted to control the valves of one's heart.' I know of few more wonderful experiences than one's first glimpse, through the lattice of Lytton Strachey's excited pages, of the period in which language reached one of its moments of supreme excellence

and great writers were able to spend themselves to the last in 'an unwavering, an indomitable pursuit of the endless glories of art'. For Strachey the revelation of the *Maximes* and the *Caractères*, the *Fables* and the *Pensées*, was one which he sought throughout his life—that of a disinterested eminence, an epoch in which perfection was possible; here at last was a time in history, and a department of human effort, in which the twin panniers of guilt and sin had not proved too heavy for the logic of human fulfilment. He felt most immediate sympathy with those for whom these panniers did not exist at all; but even where great writers had readily accepted the obsolete burden, he could not restrain his transports of professional admiration. The stupendous accords of Bossuet, the diluvian zealotry of Pascal and the gentler persuasions of Fénelon were nearly as delightful to him as the discreet petards of Montesquieu. Lytton Strachey came of a century in which, as he saw it, men of universal capacity were maimed and distorted by a ridiculous religion. Privately he felt that the loss of faith was, as it had turned out in the case of J. A. Froude, 'rather like the loss of a heavy portmanteau, which one afterwards discovers to have been full of old rags and brickbats'. The Church of England produced only monstrosities; and 'English Gothic seems to show that England was Anglican long before the Reformation'. His French studies were, however, not so much a protest against the Victorian age as a search for its complement, for the point at which the extreme of unfruitful superstition would merge into its opposite, and the exquisite obeisances of *Esther* would dispel the inanity of Manning's conviction that a book, 'like food and raiment, is part of our humiliation. To found an order or to feed a flock is better than to write a library.'

The France of his favourite writers was also the France of Lytton Strachey's ideal society. The outlines of this became clearer during his lifetime, for ours is a century in which indispensable personages are at last being dragged clear of the debris of history. Horace Walpole, Charles Greville and Queen Victoria are three of those who profit most by this; and with them is Madame du Deffand, the heroine of the essay in which Lytton Strachey came nearest to exposing his heart. Sir Max Beerbohm tells us that when he lunched with Lady Strachey 'she was old and almost blind, but immensely vivacious, and a very fount of wit, and with her I felt as though I were in the very presence of Mme. du Deffand'.

Human dignity is a perishable attribute, but we can all go to the Tate Gallery and judge, from Simon Bussy's portrait of Lady Strachey, what it meant to go as a beardless stranger to Gordon Square, and by reflection what it meant to Fox when, as 'an English cub, fresh from Eton, he was introduced by his tutor into the red and yellow drawing-room, where the great circle of a dozen or more elderly and important persons, glittering in jewels and orders, pompous in powder and rouge, ranged in rigid order round the fireplace, followed with the precision of a perfect orchestra, the leading word or smile or nod of an ancient Sibyl, who seemed to survey the company with her eyes shut, from a vast chair by the wall'. Madame du Deffand is the leader of that spectral company of Frenchwomen to whom Lytton Strachey most liked to play homage. There are others: Madame de Sévigné, for instance, 'one of those chosen beings in whom the forces of life are so abundant and so glorious that they overflow in every direction and invest whatever they meet with the virtue of their own vitality'; but Madame du Deffand was the ideal consolatrix, and the re-perusal of her letters the durable ticket to a land of intelligent and melodious discretion. In her correspondence, and in the legend of her conversation ('those quick, illimitable, exquisitely articulated syllables') he glimpsed, in perfection, the politest form of human commerce. As persons, no less than as writers, the Deffands and the Sévigné's were classical artists. As it was in the theatre, so it was in life; the seeming rigidity of the alexandrine and the verbal reserve of the salons did not exclude the wildest extremes of human feeling. Behind the gates by Tijou and the façades by Mansart unmentionable objects lay hid; the new tapestries by Boucher, and the old ones by Coypel, gave onto a hideous cloaca of human cupidity, double-dealing and despair. Lytton Strachey, whose greatest delight was to entertain his friends, responded with passion to this 'singular and fortunate generation'. 'Never, certainly, before or since,' he wrote, 'have any set of persons lived so absolutely and unreservedly with and for their friends as these high ladies and gentlemen of the middle years of the eighteenth century.' He responded equally to the intimate props and distresses to which no habit of dissembling could ever entirely give the lie. A great literary epoch could be also, he noted, an age of archaic vanities; but to the sequence of great women who, from 1650 to 1790, were the staunch and

rustling Boadiceas of French literary life, he paid his continual tribute of wistful attention. Today the Lafayettes and the Deffands, the Scudérys and the Lespinasses are gone from the earth; the *grandes eaux* of Versailles play only for republican holidays; a municipal tramway leads to the avenues of Sceaux, and only a Menier or a Citroën can reopen the saloons of Vaux-le-Vicomte. But as we roller-skate along the marble floor of Saint-Simon's narrative, all this is changed, and Time meets his conqueror. This, I think, is the lesson which Lytton Strachey wished us to learn—that of an uncomplaining stoicism in a world whose hurtful absurdities could only be composed and rendered tolerable by the magic of art. Art alone endures, he seems to say; elsewhere, between the deceptions of the body and the inconstant movement of the heart, no peace can be had.

A proper modesty before great models allowed Lytton Strachey to follow, where the reign of Louis XIV was concerned, the path marked out by the racing footsteps of Voltaire; nor was he too proud to take an adjective from Diderot or the substance of a long anecdote from the *Lundis* of Sainte-Beuve. Sometimes, in fact, the withdrawal of these venerated guides betrays him into insobriety of language. I know of a copy of the *Landmarks* in which an older master of English prose has amended the famous eulogy of Versailles; one sentence has been docked of ten adjectives, to the great benefit of the whole. Strachey's habit of dramatization continues even in the context of a text-book; but in the tremendous antitheses which make up the history of French literature it found a reasonable outlet—above all in the handling of the great triad of Corneille, Molière and Racine. Lytton Strachey's friends remember him as wonderfully and continuously gay; and although in his last illness he achieved the equanimity of Hume and the capacity to 'see death approach gradually, without anxiety or regret', his bias was in general towards an actively comical view of existence. 'By the magic of comedy', he once wrote, 'what is scabrous, what is melancholy, what is vicious, and what is tiresome in the actual life of society is converted into charming laughter and glittering delight'. During his last years he devised Christmas plays for his home in Wiltshire—extravaganzas with African or Indian scenes—and perhaps his supreme ambition was to become a contemporary Congreve, a master of comedy on the scale of the writer whose

plays seemed to him 'among the most wonderful and glorious creations of the human mind'. To such an enthusiast, the French theatre makes an irresistible appeal. Strachey's passages on Corneille and Molière are very good, but on Racine he writes with all the power of which he is capable. Here was the ideal theatre—the most diverse and fearful passions exposed with the most consummate and retiring art. The Titus of Suetonius, with his eunuchs and his dancing catamites, was an Eminent Roman; the Titus of Racine seemed, by his marmoreal musings and the signal grandeur of his decisions, to belong to an Antonine age of human creation. Strachey and Maurice Baring were the first modern Englishmen to appreciate Racine, or rather to appropriate him as a constant companion. For both of them his image was mingled with that of Sarah Bernhardt, whose *Phèdre* placed her with Rachel, Clairon, and Dumesnil in the not overcrowded Pantheon of the classical stage. For many intellectuals the idea of the theatre is often more exciting than the theatre itself, and certainly few Shakespearian productions, for example, can rival the inward spectacle to which the perusal of Granville-Barker gives rise. For a later generation, *Phèdre* has been illuminated in long essays by Valéry and Gide, and above all in the *mise-en-scène* devised by Jean-Louis Barrault for the Comédie Française. Fifty years separate us from the stupefying genius of Bernhardt, and in its place we have the precise and intelligent lyricism of Barrault. Strachey recalls how Bernhardt spoke the famous line

Chaque mot sur mon front fait dresser mes cheveux

'with hysteric irony, with dreadful, mocking laughter. The effect was absolutely overwhelming, and Racine himself could only have bowed to the ground before such a triumphant audacity'. To Barrault, who builds up the speech with devoted regard to the grand architecture of the whole, this fearful line 'n'est qu'un long et formidable frisson, comme si la foudre lui parcourait la colonne vertébrale de bas en haut'. And a few lines later, when Racine has taken care to place in the ear of the spectator the word 'urne', with all its associations of doom, he brings off his hammer-stroke in the culminating line:

Je crois voir de ta main tomber l'urne terrible.

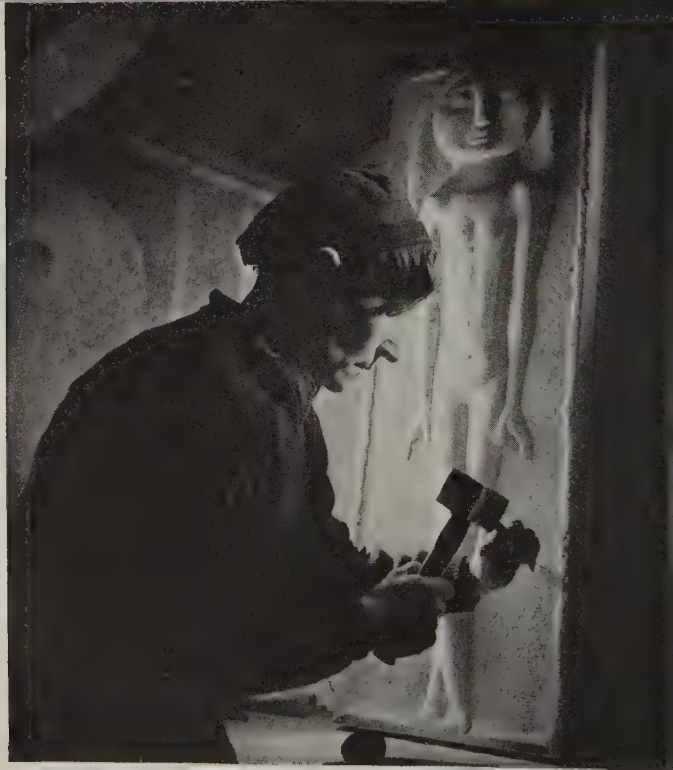
Barrault remarks here that *Phèdre* 'n'est plus qu'un foyer électrique, son sang la quitte', and that the lines are 'entrecoupés de

déglutitions, de hoquets, de suffocations, de reprises de respiration'. It is a great climax, on any reading; but for Lytton Strachey it was, as Bernhardt played it, one of the supreme moments of life. 'The secret of that astounding utterance', he wrote after her death, 'baffles the imagination. The words boomed and crashed with a superhuman resonance which shook the spirit of the hearer like a leaf in the wind. The *voix d'or* has often been raved over; but in Sarah Bernhardt's voice there was more than gold; there was thunder and lightning; there was Heaven and Hell.'

A good deal of Lytton Strachey is in those sentences—his love for France, and for the canons of giant art which ruled there under Louis XIV; his love of the theatre; and his love of praising what seemed to him to be, by the highest standards, supremely well done. These traits have not all recurred in his followers; and not all of his own work was as good as one could wish it to have been. He is one of those writers who appear to sympathetic readers as more interesting and more important than any one of their books; his is very certainly not a case like that of Edmund Gosse, where one particular book has hit off something bigger and more complete than the man himself. Lytton Strachey is not valued very highly by most young writers; but to a few at least he appears as one who attempted to recapture the athletic intelligence of the eighteenth century, who persisted in re-kindling intellectual traditions to which most writers of his time were strangers, and who only half-concealed, behind a style of antique amenity, the passionate beliefs of a man of deep feeling. He began late, though he never conceived of himself as being anything but a writer, and he died early; his work is only a fragment of what he might have hoped to complete. The great subjects remain, like a dry river-bed awaiting equinoctial rains. Perhaps a new generation of writers may think it worth while to attempt them, and to take as a motto a sentence of Fontenelle: 'c'est prolonger la vie des grandes hommes, que de poursuivre dignement leurs entreprises'. If they do so, they will need to remember another lesson of Lytton Strachey's—that the best will always kill off the good, and that there is a judgement more exacting than that of living readers: the unsmiling tribunal of the past.



PRINNER'S STUDIO







FRÉDÉRIC DELANGLADE
CONTEMPORARY
SCULPTORS: VI

THE RIDDLE OF PRINNER

WE were first introduced to work by the sculptor Prinner at the Salon des Surindépendants in 1945, and subsequently at the Galerie Pierre in 1946.

At first sight, his work was to surprise us and to evade the usual analysis, less because of its strangeness than of its denial of the conventional postulates of sculpture: in particular, the search for tactile values, systematically achieved by every plastic work.

Rodin, Maillol, have described sensuality by the most classically seductive means; Rodin emphatically, Maillol with ingenuousness; but where are we to place Prinner?

His art would have more affinities with the Roman style than with archaic Greek or with Assyrian, but for the presence of unconscious forces, making themselves felt through the skin and overwhelming the spectator with a sweet interior melody, rather than appealing to the tactile sense. The existence of such values confines Prinner's work within the framework of the dream.

On the other hand, he does not succumb to the facility of the formless, nor does he make use of the ectoplasm of the libido exploited by the false surrealists or of available Freudian echoes. Morphologically, his models are always women by their external attributes, and men by their bone structure, but that is only a superficial aspect of his work. If this physical ambivalence is, in itself, sufficient to bewilder the physical conception of the spectator who, whether we like it or not, identifies himself with the work he is looking at, nevertheless, the dream is palpably expressed. Prinner gives it expression.

I challenge Prinner to have conceived the forms of his 'tête de taureau en gestation' with *reason*.

Prinner himself is perfectly in harmony with this new reality. His work resembles it in every feature. Choosing the forms for it, he does not hesitate between a thousand temptations. His instinct makes him lift on his shoulders, first 'the cock singing

with satisfied desire', then 'the owl of anguish', and then 'the vampire of becoming': each a new plastic problem to solve.

Surrendering to the passive voices of the unconscious, he polishes his phallic forms with a powerful, continuously increasing desire, turning to stone, in each work, a particular deeply longed-for metamorphosis.

Prinner makes us put our finger on a riddle without precedent whose answer can only be guessed at in the language of dreams. 'Confidentially, his forms whisper an imperceptible sigh, resigned to the impossible, and, as if in a dream, they seem to be in search of a hope of finding the affection which their creator's mind seeks in vain, and which serves as the motive of all his creations.'

It would be quite useless to avail ourselves of the familiar keys to this puzzle as Prinner has made a reality of the dream, and as the transformation implies he has sufficiently nimble wings to escape at our approach.

Prinner reduces the anecdote to silence, and orders its rhythms with authority, without hampering the flight of the interior melody, quivering in each particle of the material. Out of this duality is born his talent which has found a way to materialize the elusive with the least suitable means to this end.

By giving life to these stone women, Prinner passes on the echo of the beauty lost amongst the ruins of Greece. His Apollonian gesture is a sign of the necessity for a pause after the chaotic halting-places of contemporary commercial art. He puts an end to the collective nightmare, having found in himself those autonomous forces which alone determine the creation of a work of art.

May his message be heard, in spite of the riddle it propounds; a riddle which our lack of purity does not yet allow us to solve.

[*Translated by* PETER WATSON]

EVELYN WAUGH

SIR—May I correct an inaccuracy in my article in your December issue on Evelyn Waugh? I wrote that to call Pius V a saint, as Mr. Waugh does in his book on *Campion*, was 'to debase the currency of words'. Several people (including Mr. Waugh himself, in a most courteous note) have reminded me that Pius V was canonized, a fact that I had forgotten. I shall be grateful if you will find space for this apology.

ROSE MACAULAY

WE very much regret that we were unable to print Miss Macaulay's letter in the January number, owing to lack of space.—THE EDITOR.

TOM HOPKINSON

HOW WE BOUGHT THE 'LORD ANGUS'

THE barmaid of the 'Twelve Tribes of Galway' rested her soft bosom on the counter. She had black hair, blue eyes and a bubbling voice like a Guinness being poured out. Her figure was everything that could be desired, and perhaps a trifle more. As to that, however, the reporter told himself, he'd know better when the evening was out.

Aloud he asked: 'Can't you get me in to see the Captain, Molly?'

'Ah, the poor man—he's tired out. He's seein' no one. What would he want to see *you* for anyway?'

'You'd see me, Molly, wouldn't you, even if you were tired out?' The reporter was short and inclined to fat. His bright eyes and golden hair gave him the look of a dissolute choir-boy. 'Go on, Molly,' he urged. 'You can get me in to see him, you know. You're the only one that can.'

'What'll I tell him?' she asked, weakening. 'You know he made me promise to let no one in.'

'Oh, tell him I'm from the Harbour Board. Tell him I'm an Elder Brother of Trinity House. No, I know what—tell him I've a message from the owners.'

The girl tripped away down the passage, coming back in a minute to say that the Captain would see Mr. Lamb—and God help him if he wasn't what he said he was. Lamb bought a bottle of whisky, slipped it, with two glasses, into his raincoat pocket, and followed the girl towards the back of the building. As she reached a door and knocked he made a grab at her. She was expecting it, or perhaps by now the movement was instinctive. At any rate she slipped out of his hands, leaving Lamb half-in half-out of a small room which was, no doubt, the private parlour. Fire in grate, oil-lamp on table; the figure standing by the mantelpiece was, Lamb presumed, the master of the *Lord Angus*—hard aground since yesterday on a shoal in Galway Bay. He looked about as much like a sea-captain as a Cruikshank drawing of a Dickens waiter.

In age he must have been nearly fifty. He was tall, with the face and forehead of a scholar—a scholar, to judge by his expression, of some exceedingly abstruse and boring subject. He had no hair on top of his head, but thick and rather greasy wool sprouted out of the sides around his ears. On his bony nose perched spectacles as powerful as microscopes. He had a complexion like old cement, and was wearing a bespattered grey suit which seemed to thicken out at knees and elbows like a camel's legs—much creased, too, from his habit of doing up all the buttons. On the table beside him, looking like a specimen brought in for examination, lay a peaked seaman's cap. This being looked Lamb up and down in a manner both insolent and appraising.

'Message from the owners?' he remarked in a cultured voice, but with the raised tones of the habitually peevish. 'Message from my backside! From the wholesome genial look of you I should say you're another of those bloody reporters.'

'I've been bothered with that lot myself,' said Lamb. 'So I can guess what you've been putting up with.'

'Then you *are* one.'

Quickly Lamb started a new line: 'Not only am I a reporter, I'm the representative of the yellowest sheet in London—in the whole British Empire. My name's Lamb. You'll have guessed the paper I'm from already.' He smiled confidently.

'If you're relying on candour and those bonny blue eyes to secure my life-story in fifty-two instalments,' said the Captain, 'you might as well take a running jump at yourself. I've nothing to say. My crew behaved splendidly: they were out of her almost before she touched. The coastguards were magnificent: they nearly shot my eye out with their bloody rocket-lines—when all we wanted was to be left to launch the boats in peace. The life-boatmen were into her almost before we were out—to make sure we hadn't left any gold wrist-watches behind. Just a simple routine job for all concerned. Now, get to the telephone—and leave me to my meditations.'

Reporters may not be chosen for their moral character, but they do not hold their jobs without persistence.

'Come, come, Captain,' Lamb began, summoning yet another smile; 'it's no good turning me out. I'll be back again before you've closed the door. Just let me know how the whole thing happened, and I'll leave you in peace for the rest of the evening.'

'Why the hell should I tolerate you even for a moment? Why should any decent . . . ' words withered on the Captain's tongue.

'Look here,' said the reporter, 'you play fair by me, and I'll play fair by you. Tell me what I want—and I'll fix it so that you aren't bothered by any of the others.'

'How could you possibly fix that, even if you wanted to?'

'Is it a bargain?' Lamb demanded.

'How can you do it?'

'I've only to go to the phone and book you a room at the Grand Central, leaving word that you'll be in around ten-thirty tonight. If anyone asks for you here, Molly'll tell them—as a special favour—that you've shifted over there because of the reporters. When they call at the Grand Central they'll find there's a room booked, and will stick around drinking till you come. By half-past eleven they may smell a rat and start nosing over here again—but by then this place will be shut.'

'I could see you'd more lies in your head than you have hairs of manhood', declared the Captain, 'the minute you came inside this door. Go and book the room—while I invent you the story of the wreck.'

Passing through the bar on his way back from the telephone, Lamb noticed in a corner a group of seven or eight men. They were a rough-looking lot, who'd have had a job to raise a quid between them, but they were drinking whisky. Lamb went over to the bar: 'Irish, please—and sing something to yourself, Molly. I want to ask a question.'

Molly reached for the bottle and began to hum:

As I was going up the stairs
As a dacent woman should
The roguey did the very same
I always knew he would.

He was a mean rogue, a rough rogue, a rogue
of low degree
Now listen while I tell you what the roguey
did to me . . .

'What are they after?' he asked under cover of the song. Still singing, in a soft bubbling voice that distracted him from his inquiry, she jerked her head up the passage.

'Not his ruddy crew?'

She nodded.

Lamb ordered another drink and drifted round the room, looking at the pictures. He was probably the first person to look at them since they were hung. Over in the crew's corner where he stopped, an argument was going on: 'He's got plenty, hasn't he? The old flicker! Why shouldn't we touch him for a slice?'

'What about the bleedin' insurance? He's part-owner, isn't he?' A heavily built man with a moon-face and a seaman's jersey was egging the others on.

As Lamb drifted back, the moon-faced man, backed by two others, came over to the bar;

'The Captain's in the pub,' he said to Molly. 'Are you going to bring him out, or shall we come round there and look for him?' He put one hand on the bar as if to spring across. Molly began to stammer. . . .

'It couldn't be Captain Fosdick you're inquiring for, gentlemen, could it?' Lamb cut in. 'Because I'm after him myself. Maybe we can help each other. I'm from the Dublin City Police.' The three sailors looked at one another.

'Oh, it isn't much,' Lamb told them reassuringly. 'I dare say I shan't need to keep the Captain long. A small matter in connection with the pilfering of cargo. Some things missing that should be there—understandable, of course, in the confusion. We have to look into these things. I expect the Captain can settle it right away—or the first mate now, if I can only come up with him.'

Lamb's friendly face and open manner conveyed something extraordinarily sinister to the crew—as perhaps he knew they would. Smoothly he chattered on: 'Did you say the Captain's in the pub? How did you find that out? My men have been looking for him everywhere. They're out now trying to lay hands on one or two of the crew to see if they know anything about it. No harm, of course. Nothing criminal. Simply a little matter of routine.'

'We thought he was in the pub,' grunted the moon-faced man. 'That is, someone told us he might be. But this girl here says he's gone, and she should know. Round the town drinking—that's where he'll be most likely. . . . If we run across him we'll send you word.'

'Do,' agreed Lamb, actually waving his hand at them. 'I'll be making this my headquarters for a couple of hours. Ask for Inspector Doolan—and have a whisky on the police if you come across him.'

As the men went out, Molly and he looked at one another: 'My God!' said Molly admiringly, 'you've got the brain of an Archbishop under those shining curls. For a minute those devils had me frightened.' And she began to sing:

As I was taking off my shoes
As a dacent woman should
The roguey did the very same
I always knew he would . . .

★ ★ ★

'Must have been wanting to thank me for all I did for 'em,' remarked the Captain. 'Illuminated address being prepared. Some nonsense of that kind.'

'I had the illusion,' Lamb replied, 'that they were planning to take you apart and see whether there was any money hidden about your person. But if you think you're missing something, I'm sure I can still catch them up.'

The Captain shook his head. 'I shouldn't,' he said. 'Not on second thoughts.'

'It was really a mistake to give them anything at all,' suggested Lamb. 'Some creatures have no sense of gratitude. And they may have got a sort of idea that you had something to conceal.'

'Give them anything!' cried the Captain as if he had been stung. 'What the hell d'you take me for? I'd sooner cut their livers out. I haven't even paid them what they're owed. If they've got a quid between them they've either spun a story to a priest or flogged the lifeboat we came off in.'

'My mistake,' Lamb apologized. 'I should have known better. Now—let's have the whole story.'

The reporter had pulled a pad out of his pocket. As he sat there, legs crossed and pencil poised, there appeared about him something oddly childlike, something that belied his general spryness. There was an expression almost like innocence about his eyes and forehead. The Captain glanced at him once or twice, cleared his throat, stretched his legs—then, instead of beginning

his story, got up and walked over to the fireplace. 'Muddled . . . a bit queer . . . not sure how to begin.'

Lamb was aware of the muttering delay, but not of the cause. When you can't get someone talking, he had found, the best thing is to talk yourself. 'Since you know what really happened to the *Lord Angus*,' he remarked cheerfully, 'how'd you like to hear how the wreck looked from Fleet Street?'

'Oh, yes,' agreed the Captain absently.

'Early last night we got a flash on the tape: BRITISH MERCHANT-SHIP *LORD ANGUS* AGROUND IN GALWAY BAY RESCUE PROCEEDING. The flash came to the news-editor—Dawson—who's in charge of the reporters. There're about a dozen of us, all in one big room, and he's supposed to find work for the lot, when actually he could manage with half that number.'

'Why do they keep so many?'

'They hate anyone leaving whom they haven't sacked, and at this moment it's not easy to sack anyone without giving some good reason. Anyway, however many reporters he's given, the news-editor has to keep them busy. So when something comes along that'll take me off his hands for several days, he jumps at it. On top of that, as he's never been further into the world than the outlying pubs of Ludgate Circus, he's got some pretty queer ideas about what goes on—and he likes to see these ideas reflected in the paper. So he sends for me before I leave, and gives me a sort of picture of the story as it seems to him.'

'Which is what you're expected to find when you get down here?'

'Pretty much.'

'And what does he see of the *Lord Angus*? . . . Don't tell me,' cried the Captain, who seemed to be coming round from his absorption. 'He sees a schooner in a snowstorm, driving up to some horrible black rocks. Lashed to the mast is the skipper's schoolgirl daughter. The crew is taking to the boats, while a lot of half-naked savages, festooned with seaweed, hover around in currachs picking the survivors off with shafts of Gaelic.'

'Go on,' Lamb encouraged him, 'but don't forget your own heroic efforts.' He got the whisky-bottle and glasses from his raincoat and filled half-a-tumbler for them each.

'Women and wine,' observed the Captain, 'transmuted in my

own case into whisky and . . . However, before we consider my failings I'll complete the story.'

What Captain Fosdick had to tell was dull enough—dark night with swirling fog, a tricky channel, an error of judgement. There was nothing remarkable, nothing even interesting in it—but for the astounding fact of the Captain himself, with his don's voice and the air of a defrocked priest, having been concerned in it at all. As the tale proceeded, he added another farcical touch—of hypochondria—to the impossible impression he created. In a room as snug as an oven he was constantly complaining of the draught and going to the door to see if it were properly closed. He took pills from tins and bottles, and ended up by warning Lamb to be sure and book a room at the 'Twelve Tribes' so that he need not go out into the night. It was raining, he urged, and it would be unwise to go searching around and getting his feet wet. He actually went to the door, called Molly, and booked the room next to his own, which happened to be empty.

The Captain finished his account: 'I'm afraid it's pretty boring,' he admitted. 'Truth usually is.'

'Yes,' agreed Lamb, 'But I only wanted it for a follow-up. I sent my own story back as soon as I got down here: had to, in any case, to make the earlier editions. I gave the news-editor his own version. More colourful than yours, and a better chance of getting printed.'

'Ha! Ha!' observed the Captain, with what was apparently intended for a friendly laugh. 'And now that's over we can settle down and enjoy the evening peacefully.'

This was very far from being what Lamb intended. He had got all the information that was any use to him, much more than would ever find space in the paper, and he had no wish to spend a couple more hours in the Captain's company. On top of that he had heard for the last half-hour what sounded like the glad beginning of a party in another room. There was laughter, the cheerful clinkings of glass, and a voice, which he took to be Molly's, bubbled out the first verse or two of 'Sweet Molly Malone'—with a form of words, he imagined, specially suited to an intimate occasion.

'Well, Captain,' he began, 'I don't really need to keep you any longer. And I'm sure you'll have your reports to make out and so on'.

'But the whisky! The whisky isn't drunk yet. You can't leave with the bottle three-quarters full.'

'Allow me,' Lamb began airily—after all it would all go down on expenses—to leave the bottle in gratitude for all your trouble.'

As soon as he said it, Lamb realized he'd made a horrible mistake. The Captain's face went a dull red, then something approaching black. 'The hell you do, you little sweep!' he cried. 'If you've no more manners than that, you can take your bloody bottle. Put it where the monkey put the nuts—and jigger off!'

Lamb's eagerness to get away was at once swallowed up in horror at his own social clumsiness and the necessity, not so much to make amends, as to stay on and remove this contemptible impression of himself. Those gaps and pauses in his own background which it was his incessant daily care to cover up had shown through once again. He knew he would blush for months over the recollection. For he was doubly in the wrong; not only had he insulted the Captain with the offer of what was, in effect, nothing more than a tip; in addition—by proposing, without apology, to abandon a bottle they'd started on together—he had made a breach in the etiquette of drinking, an etiquette most strictly observed in his profession. 'Well,' he stammered, 'of course, I didn't. . . . You really must excuse . . .'

The Captain was quick to seize the opportunity: 'Say no more!' he exclaimed, putting a hand on Lamb's shoulder. 'My fault. . . . Spoke a bit roughly. . . . Didn't want you to go. . . . Get a trifle lonely sometimes.'

Now by his magnanimity the Captain had made Lamb doubly safe. He guided him into a fireside chair, poured them each out a drink, and sat down himself. However, in spite of his best efforts, the conversation sickened. He spoke about the district—but neither of them had ever been in the town before. He tried to start Lamb talking again about his office—but with no success. The awkwardness persisted, swelling continuously to silence. Five minutes more of this and Lamb would be free, the Captain recognised, to make his peace and leave. He sat up in his chair as if his mind were suddenly made up: 'If you really want to know how the *Lord Angus* got there . . . ?' he suggested.

This time Lamb was on his guard: he knew better than to answer that he had already heard.

'Indeed I do,' he said.

'Strictly between ourselves—not to be breathed outside this door?' Lamb nodded.

'She got there because I put her there.'

'You *put* her there? You mean on purpose?'

The Captain nodded. 'I've told you a lot of bloody lies tonight—and for all you or anyone else can ever know I'm telling you a lot more bloody lies now. But if you care to know how she got there, it was just like that. Mind you, there was nothing to boast of in the job itself': he waved his hand, a curiously long hand with well-cared-for fingers. 'Any Galway Bay pilot could have done the same. There's a hell of a rip at some states of the tide. Instead of holding her off, you just let it take you on. Where the skill comes in is in doing it just right. You've got to put her there without danger—that's the first thing!' He ticked the points off on his fingers. 'With a crew like that—the dregs of Cardiff slums—you can't afford to take risks. They've no sense of loyalty. If anyone got left behind, it might be me. So everyone has to be got safely off. That's your first problem. Secondly, you've got to stick her there without a scandal. That means you can't just charge her up on to an island like a stranded whale: you've got to miss your course by no more than a few feet in the filthiest weather conditions. It can be pretty hard around these channels sometimes to *keep* course, when at the worst you've got fifty or a hundred yards to play with. To miss it means perfect reckoning and absolute canal-barge steering. Finally, you've got to put her there for good. If those bloody insurance companies can do you down by pulling her off again, they will. All the tugs in Liverpool will never shift the *Lord Angus*. There's a spike of rock like the horn of a rhinoceros through her plates. It's one of the neatest jobs in the history of the sea—and it all went as easy as kiss my fanny! All the same'—and he wagged his manicured forefinger—'I'd never have fetched you back here just to tell you that. The story isn't how we lost the *Lord Angus*: it's how we bought her. Strictly for your own private ear, of course, dear boy. I suppose you can spare the time to hear it?'

Lamb hesitated. He knew why he had been told this much—to whet his appetite for more. He knew what he was being asked to do. He was signing away a happy evening in the other room, for this would certainly be his last chance to get away. He thought it extremely likely that he was signing away Molly too. Just

what he was signing on for, he couldn't tell, but it was almost certain to be unpleasant. However, the hook was in his gills, and he had now no choice.

'Yes, Captain,' he declared. 'I'd like to hear how you bought her very much.'

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'You must understand', the Captain began, 'that I'm not in business by myself. I have a partner. That's how you got in here at all. We have to use rather unusual means of communication, and I thought it possible you might be bringing me a message. My partner is a business man—shall we call him Finch? He looks after the financial end, and I take charge of the marine side of things. He produces the goods, and I dispose of them. He was trained in accountancy when he was young, just as I was trained for the sea. We've each kept to our callings—but with modifications necessary to meet the increased cost of living.' He looked at Lamb over his spectacles like a schoolmaster wishing to be sure his pupil is following the lesson. Lamb nodded back, the smile drying on his lips.

'Finch', the Captain continued, 'is a very remarkable man. He understands business inside out—how to buy, how to sell, how to find cargoes, how to have papers made out, how to get goods insured. I'm a complete novice myself at all these things. Even problems of identity present no difficulty to him. Fosdick, did you call me? Well, well—when you know me better . . . And the *Lord Angus*—most surprising. I may as well tell you now that, as a captain, I've been extraordinarily unlucky, "dogged by misfortune" were the words actually used in the High Court. If I had a home of my own they should be framed over the mantelpiece with the snapshots of the wife and kiddies. Through all misfortunes Finch has stood by me. Never a word of reproach. A man in a million.' The Captain paused. 'If I'm boring you,' he said, 'just let me know.' He took a swallow and went on without waiting for reply: 'Finch is a big man, finely built, with a hearty manner—a good eater and drinker, likes a good story, mixes well; attractive to women, I should think. I, as you see, am the diffident, retiring type. Quite his opposite in all respects. When we first heard of the *Lord Angus* I hadn't been to sea for some months. You know, dear boy, how we seamen

get when parted from Mother Ocean—also funds were low. Finch wanted money too. Her name then was something different—just *what* escapes me for the moment—and she was in the hands of an old Greek by the name of Simonides. Simonides and Finch had known each other years ago. In fact Simonides had offered the *Lord Angus* to Finch only twelve months before, for £15,000. At £15,000 she wasn't a bad buy—but that's where my dear Finch is so splendid. If Simonides asked that for her, Finch reckoned, he must be willing to take less, so Finch simply told him—in the friendliest possible way—to get the hell out of his office and come back when he had some reasonable proposition. It seems he already knew that Simonides was breaking up.

“Twelve months later—that is about six months back—Simonides came in again. He was about half the size he'd been when he called the year before, and he had to be helped up the staircase. When he could manage to stop coughing, it turned out that he wanted £12,000 for the *Lord Angus*.

““That's a hell of a lot for a rotten old hulk like that,” said Finch. “However, I'll talk it over with my partner. It may be we can make an offer.” He sent for me.

““This is our meat,” he said. “She's under Government control still, so she's sure of cargoes (we've had a little difficulty from time to time in finding cargoes for our ships). She's practically rusted through—so if she *should* touch anywhere, she'll stick. And if the worst happens, the country won't have lost a vital asset.” We had lunch on it, and arranged to meet Simonides, and fix the whole thing up.

“A week or two later we had our first meeting. We met in Simonides' office. It's rather roomier than ours, and in a rather better quarter of the town. There was Simonides and his brother on their side. On ours there was Finch and myself—with a very dear old friend of mine who sometimes draws up contracts and agreements for us. The legal side of things. He doesn't talk and I don't talk. Simonides doesn't let his brother talk. So mainly what happens is that Finch talks and Simonides coughs—I'm sorry to see that he hasn't got any better during the past week. In fact there's a nurse with him all the time, and every now and then he has to be wheeled behind a screen. Once or twice, too, he passes out in a sort of way, simply leaning back with his eyes closed and going quite white—or rather a sort of green all over.

However, he doesn't appear to have lost his business sense, and after one of these attacks he always bargains with unusual energy. What we're doing, of course, is going through the schedule. About the main price of £12,000, Finch hasn't committed himself, but he's let it be understood that he thinks it all right in principle. Then, in addition to the ship, there's this whole schedule of things we take over with her—such-and-such trading agreements; such-and-such extra fittings; coal stored up for her on shore; year's rent for an office; two desks and a table; a pot of tea for the typists—Christ knows what. Everything on that schedule has to be fought over. Some of the things he's had the cheek to list as assets aren't assets at all, they're bloody liabilities—like the rent for the office, which is owing and not paid. Certain other things, like the 200 tons of coal there's supposed to be, don't exist. It was in her bunkers when the agreement was drawn up, and has now been burned—a mere oversight of course. And if Finch hadn't got on the phone to Cardiff, we'd have paid for it.

'So it goes on—argument, cough, splutter, choke, argument, passing-out, revival—followed by more coughing. You couldn't help respecting old Simonides, he was lying his way into hell before our eyes. At last, after four days of it, we were pretty well through. We came to one of the last things on the schedule—a motor lifeboat. In addition to the usual lifeboats, the *Lord Angus* carried a big motor lifeboat slung up on the main deck, I suppose so that her captain could get away if she fell to pieces in the water. However, there hadn't been any occasion to use it, and the boat was rotten. I'd been down to see the *Lord Angus*—the merest friendly visit to the Captain—and when I looked over the gunwale of this precious motor-boat there were toadstools the size of a baby's head sprouting out of the inside. £500 he was putting on the bill for that. Honesty got the better of me at that, dear boy, and for the first time I put in my oar.

"It won't make firewood," I said. "It's too rotten to burn. If the engine hadn't rusted away first, it would have fallen through the bottom."

'All I got was a savage kick on the ankle from my good friend, Finch. He'd spotted that if he lets Simonides do us over the lifeboat, he'll be so elated over this small swindle, we shall be able to cut a few thousand off the total sum.

'Well, we come to the end of the schedule, and old Simonides

heaves a sigh of relief. He'd been wondering whether he could last out: "Thank God that's fixed," he says.

"Yes," answers Finch in his pleasantest way. "Now we've only the main purchase price to think about. We've talked it over. My partner's been to see the ship. You're asking far too much. We've agreed the schedule, and we'll add £8,000 for the *Lord Angus*. That's our last word. You go away and think it over. Come back again after the week-end."

'Now in saying this, Finch is taking a tremendous risk—one of the bravest things I've ever heard of in the business world.'

Lamb looked up from the armchair in which he had slumped for the last half-hour. The Captain took his glance for an inquiry.

'Glad to know you're still awake, dear boy,' he remarked. 'Allow me to fill your glass.'

'Of course I'm awake,' Lamb declared, though in fact a painful and unpleasant sleepiness, the sleepiness of the nightmare, hung about his vision. 'What was the risk you speak of?'

'The gamble Finch is taking', went on the Captain, in his cultured, peevish voice, 'is that Simonides will keep alive over the next few days. The old man's been going downhill hard. He now spends almost as much time behind the screen as he does in front. Finch knows that the old man can't accept this offer straight off, even if he wants to. It wouldn't look well in the first place, having asked £15,000 and come down to twelve already. Secondly it's bound to stick in his guts to have been done down like that by Finch. He's got to have time to work himself up to swallowing the situation as the best he can do in the time he's got. However, we are confident that he will swallow it—if the power of swallowing anything at all is left him until Tuesday.'

'How can you be sure?'

'Because of the very interesting relationship that exists between the two brothers—a relationship, I need hardly say, of detestation and distrust. I must explain, dear boy, that from previous deals of this kind—in which Finch and I have sometimes had quite dishonest characters to deal with—we have worked out a sort of simple technique. He watches the chief character on the other side throughout. I concentrate my modest powers of observation on the second. It happens therefore that, at the moment when Finch refuses to pay more than eight thousand pounds for the *Lord Angus*, I am watching Simonides' brother. He's a miserable

little squirt with a face like the backside of a farthing and about as much expression as a barber's cat. But when he hears this, his whole face lights up for about a quarter of a second. Then he smooths it out again. But I know now that he doesn't want the *Lord Angus* to be sold.

'This happens to fit in with what our good lawyer has found out for us already. As a simple matter of precaution, we've checked up as far as we could on affairs in the Simonides family. Old Simonides—believe it or not—has a girl-friend; after all he hasn't been an invalid all his life. He wants the sale finished so that he can give her the cash. If he dies before the ship's sold, the brother—who's a junior partner in the firm—will be left managing the business, even if it's been willed over to the girl. Simonides knows quite well what'll happen then. The brother will manage the ship, continue trading with her, and milk out all the profit as expenses for himself.

'So Finch knows that, in Simonides' mind, it's now or never for the sale. But he knows something else. He knows that, faced with a week-end's delay, the brother will never be able to keep his mouth shut. He's bound to pester old Simonides to call the whole thing off—and that's the one thing that can be relied on to make sure he carries it through.

'Well, it all goes off exactly as my dear Finch has planned it. Old Simonides is back again on the Tuesday—it had been Easter week-end, which made the odds against us even heavier—with what breath he's got, he says he'll close for nine thousand in cash. We've brought ten to be on the safe side. The money's handed over, a deed is made out in favour of the girl-friend straight away, and the brother goes off to see if there's anything movable he can lay hands on at the office. By the time he gets there the office is locked—our kind legal friend has thought of that one. This all happens on the Tuesday. On the Thursday Simonides takes to his bed, and on the Monday he takes to his coffin—to the very great relief, no doubt, of all his anxious relatives and friends . . . Still awake are you, dear boy, because perhaps it's time we were getting to our respective honest couches?'

As he said these words, the Captain moved over from his own side of the fire towards the chair in which Lamb lay restlessly sprawled. Something in the tale he had been telling and in his whole manner of speech; something in the heat of the room, the

amount of whisky Lamb had drunk, and the false position he had put himself in earlier in the evening; something in the angle of the lamp which accentuated the Captain's height and the monstrous angularity of his limbs and features; something in the truly appalling mixture of authority and depravity with which his whole being was invested; something of all these, and an apprehension of their effect upon himself, made Lamb spring up before the Captain reached him. 'Call of nature, shan't be half a minute,' he cried, and, dodging round the table, rushed out of the room.

Outside, the passage was pitch-black. Lamb turned towards the bar, and ran his face straight against a bolted door. Fumbling back along the corridor his hands felt a gap which he knew was the front stair-case leading to his bed-room. He shrank away as if he had put his hand upon the stove, and dived for the back part of the building. Round the corner a door yielded to him, and he found himself standing in a yard. The rain was coming down in torrents. As he stood there with water streaming off his hair and face he could actually feel the rain soaking its way through his clothes. Suddenly across the yard, in what appeared to be an out-house, shone a light. Lamb looked, and looked again—then rushed towards it. Flattening his short nose against the glass, he saw behind the steaming pane a sight in which all the comfort in the world seemed warmly to be summed up.

Wildly he rattled on the door. A bolt was drawn, and he looked straight into Molly's backyard-bedroom. She stood in the lamplight in her dressing-gown. 'Let me in, Molly!' he begged. 'Let me in!'

'Go on with you!' she said. 'You've got your own room—get on off to bed.'

Lamb let out a cry. His eyes seemed to have gone back inside his head.

'For Christ's sake, Molly,' he begged, his wet face twitching, 'let me in! Don't leave me by myself.' A pool of water was forming round his feet.

Molly put out her arm. 'Poor little roguey!' she said in her soft bubbling voice. 'Come along in then, dear. What's been upsetting you?'

ALAN MOOREHEAD
WHERE SHALL JOHN GO?
X—AUSTRALIA

I FANCY one only begins to appreciate Lawrence's *Kangaroo*—to get to the essence of the book—when one actually visits Australia. To the Australians themselves his descriptions of the country seem quixotic, perverse, even deliberately false: and to those who have never been there they can be only so much background taken for granted. But when you read the book and go to Australia (or return there after a long absence, as I did last year) then you begin to see as Lawrence does, to set this scene against the rest of the world, and you find his descriptions extraordinarily satisfying.

This old, old country, he keeps crying. The greyness, the flatness, the tiredness. Endless drooping trees, the worn-down earth, the sense of æons of unrecorded geological time.

It is possibly the oldest country on earth; even the wild animals are absurd anachronisms and the aborigines (such as you see of them) are the most backward of the human race. As far as one knows no great civilization ever flourished in this desert; it seems to have been a wilderness for ever, or at least until a hundred and fifty years ago, when the first settlers arrived from Europe. And now an entirely modern civilization has sprung up around the fertile edges of the continent. It is an effect (as Lawrence seems to suggest) such as if we had projected a rocket to the moon and started a colony there. There is no link with the past, nothing to bridge the gap between the skyscraper and the plastic bathroom of this century and the antediluvian lizard baking itself on the red rocks, as it has done since beyond Chinese history. The new civilization of Australia is not even a grafting on to the soil. It is a completely new plant. It rises with the unexpectedness of an oasis on a desert road.

Quite obviously the settlement of Australia as a social experiment has been a great success; the human race has refreshed itself in that climate and it has turned a great deal of the desert into a garden. The animals brought from Europe have not been so lucky. For some reason horses and many other species are said to degenerate and fall away after the second and third generation

and new stock has to be imported from Europe to revive the breed. The merino sheep, brought originally from North Africa, appears to be the main exception to this and it has flourished in Australia beyond all calculation.

I found my own return to Australia after an absence of ten years a curious mixture of nostalgia and personal emotion on the one hand, and on the other a sense of new perspectives on old things, a double strangeness occasioned by the fact that I was now looking on half-forgotten scenes with different eyes. The air journey is no pleasure to anyone who loathes flying as I do, believing it to be the most dangerous, uncomfortable, expensive, and often the slowest method of travel yet invented. A Fleet Air Arm pilot travelling as a passenger with me went white in the face as we took off from the jungle in Ceylon: we were so heavily loaded the machine used the last yard of the runway before we took off and for some minutes we were unable to rise more than a few feet above the surrounding coco-nut palms. Then for the next eighteen hours, all day and nearly all night we flew in this land plane over the open ocean. I found myself unable to read after four hours and thereafter one sat hour after hour, starting nervously at an occasional hiccough in the noise of the motors, staring at an endless nothingness of sea and clouds until the mind began to reel with the mere idea of space, pure space, insubstantial, entirely uncharted and probably hostile. There was a moment of sunset over the equator of uproarious and livid colour, and, after that, black implacable night. How can one explain the horrors of nervous insomnia in an aircraft? When, many hours later, in the first tropical green light of the morning, we saw the beams of an Australian lighthouse I think I was too exhausted to experience even relief. This ocean hop of three thousand miles, the longest in the world, has been discontinued since early this year: aircraft now use the islanded route through Singapore.

Even when one has touched the north-east corner of the continent there is a long all-day flight over reddish desert until one reaches the green fringe of cultivation on the opposite coast. And this is where the great cities lie, islands of civilization as independent and remote from the outside world as the middle west of America or the Ukraine.

At first I found myself staring uncontrollably at the Sydney shops: a pile of forty dressed chickens and turkeys in a window.

Great cubes of yellow butter. The street barrows piled with melons, peaches, grapes and pineapples. And in the hotels and homes the fabulous meals. All this, one kept saying to oneself, standing ready for the buying and the eating. No coupons. No queues. Help yourself to as much sugar in your coffee as you want.

After three or four days of this one finds oneself repeating 'But of course. How completely I had forgotten; these were the normal things of life before the war. How completely one had adjusted oneself to never having them in Europe.'

This second stage lasts for perhaps a month, and then you begin to take the abundance for granted. A new scale of values arises: you begin to complain that your breakfast eggs are overcooked, this steak is not the equal of that you had yesterday, and why has no cream been served with the strawberries? Basically, no doubt, you feel more contented and resilient, but there grows upon you a new set of petty irritations, the irritations of luxury. Having marvelled gratefully at the sunshine on your arrival you grow slightly querulous over a single rainy day.

About this time also—a month after reaching Australia—you begin to discover a number of other lacks. Though both Sydney and Melbourne have populations of over a million there was, during my stay, no theatre beyond a couple of dreary musical comedies and music halls. These have been replaced by hundreds of 'picture palaces' showing American movies. You begin to revolt against the licensing laws which, for the most part, forbid any public drinking after nightfall: pubs close at six and drinks are taken from restaurant tables at eight. Therefore you dine early; six to six-thirty is the accepted time. Dinner is a meal washed down with cups of strong, sweet tea. It is called, not dinner, but 'tea'.

As the days go by the ear becomes numbed, but still the Australian accent grates on the European ear. (Or the American ear, for that matter; the American soldiers in Australia were fond of imitating the local accents.) Equally, the brain grows hungry for the sight of a beautiful building or an elegant city square; outside the modern office blocks in the cities most Australian towns are a riot of little suburban villas, often constructed of corrugated iron and wood and flanked by huge advertisement hoardings.

But perhaps the sharpest impact of all is the mental attitude of the Australian city dweller. He has an almost truculent insistence

on the rights and privileges of the average man, the worker in the mass. To be average. To build a house similar to your neighbour's. To wear the same clothes, adopt the same manners. To regard and address all men as your equals and avoid at all costs any show of eccentricity or exhibit any interests beyond those of the average man: these things appear, after a month's experience, to be the main aims of Australian city life. And the ugly townships, the advertisement hoardings, the newspapers, and the football and racing crowds, seem to confirm the matter.

In the work of creating a classless society the Australians have probably gone further than the Russians. It is a curious *mélange* of formal Marxism and the conception of the anarchistical state in pre-Franco Catalonia. The rights of the individual are sacred. His opinion on cattle-raising, modern drama, cricket, Mozart, or what you will, is as good as the next man's. The expert or the leader is, if not despised, at least suspect for attempting to put himself above his neighbours. Criticism is welcome in the mass but violently rejected in the individual. A trade union may revolt against the Government but a man who deserts the trade unions is a traitor, a 'scab'.

The trade unions in Australia are immensely powerful. Thus, while I was there a plumber was refused beer at a pub. He informed his union, and until the pub agreed to serve beer to all plumbers at all times it could get no workman to carry out repairs on the building. In Sydney a single workman in a steel foundry was ordered by his foreman to do an inferior kind of work. He refused, was dismissed, and, as a direct result, scores of thousands of workmen came out on strike, and for a fortnight the city was largely without heating or light. Strike followed strike. More often than not the real issues did not emerge; the dismissal of a workman was simply seized on as a pretext for a trial of strength against the Government or the arbitration courts. Everywhere politics and politicians were held in great contempt, and sometimes an extraordinarily vicious contempt. Bribery in politics was quite freely talked of. To a visitor it often seemed that an overpowering materialism had overtaken Australian life and that this was matched only by the mass craving for leisure—for the forty-hour or even the thirty-five-hour week, for the gratification of the two great national passions, horse-racing and cricket, for the right to lie on the beaches in the sun. In that climate leisure has immense

attractions. As in most other countries the stimulus of money had not yet arrived to supplant the stimulus of the war, and the country lay in a trough of post-war weariness, of disillusion, of materialistic cynicism, of spiritual ennui.

This, I say, was the general impression after a stay of a month or so. First one had been overwhelmed by the abundance of good things and the freedom of living. Then one perceived the serpent in paradise, the unrest, the apparent collapse of moral and spiritual values. However, my visit was of six months. I was working on a book and I moved out of the cities into the country, where life is very different. Here everything is of a simplicity scarcely known in Europe. It was not a matter of succumbing to bucolic charm in the usual way but the crossing of a border into a new environment. I sat in the sunshine on a broad verandah and there spread out before me mile after mile of wooded valleys and mountains. The colouring was more spanish than anything else I know in Europe, vivid quickly merging purples, blue-greens, yellows and reds. There were sudden electric changes of weather; within a few seconds a tearing wind would come up and sink away; a forest fire would flare out with atomic pillars of smoke upon the mountains and at night it glowed with a thousand red eyes. Sometimes the sun would blaze for days on end, carrying its heat through the night hours when the stifling air was full of mosquitoes; and at daylight laughing jackasses and white cockatoos passed through the eucalyptus trees. Two opossums nested in the verandah roof above my head and sometimes crept into my bedroom in the darkness to eat the bowls of flowers. A family of lizards ran a course between the legs of the table on which I was writing. Then, when the rain finally came, it pelted on the baking earth in immense drops and smells of indescribable sweetness came out of the soil. Instead of shedding their leaves the trees discarded their bark for the winter, so that almost overnight one was surrounded by a forest of dazzling white trunks. Only in central Africa can I remember such richness of change, such a persistent succession of heat, colours, scents and noises. These are conditions which I personally find excellent for work; an isolation from all artificial distractions such as the telephone and the newspaper, and at the same time a teeming natural life constantly revolving around one.

I found I finished my work a month ahead of programme, and

by the time I rejoined the normal life of the city and the suburbs—I must emphasize that the great majority of Australians live and work not in the country but in cities—I found myself moving towards a third impression of Australia. And this impression is probably more accurate than its predecessors.

I reached, for example, the conclusion that the luxury of life in Australia was not quite so great as I had first imagined. There is a formidable housing shortage, as bad in its small way as anything in England. The higher types of luxury—motor cars, frigidaire—
are far too expensive for the average man to dream of possessing. At the other end of the scale there is a shortage of tobacco beyond anything known in England and pubs monotonously run out of beer. Income tax is as high as any in the world—indeed one cannot earn legally much more than fifteen hundred pounds a year.

Despite all this the physical conditions of life are infinitely better for almost everyone, more especially the worker, than they are in England or Europe. There is more food, more sunshine, more cheap amusements, more money (the minimum wage is around five pounds a week), much more leisure and the means of enjoying leisure. Children brought up in Australia have a far better chance of survival than almost anywhere in Europe.

For women, particularly married women, the advantages are not so great. Australia is a country of extremely few servants, where, in fact, domestic service is absurdly despised. Even the family laundry is done at home. And there are few restaurants. Throughout their married lives women are bound by a routine of housekeeping and bearing children, with the result that they age quickly, their clothes are dull, their interests colloquial and local, their subservience to men most marked.

All this is bound up with one of the strange contradictions of the local scene: the white Australia policy. Australians think of those last three words in capital letters. In a country of no strong traditions it is an oriflamme in their historical consciousness or, perhaps more accurately, their unconsciousness: THE WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY. It is the attitude of the white man in South Africa—but held at a distance. In other words, instead of grappling with the problem of the native races close at hand they have held it off at arm's length.

Under some ancient Kiplinesque law coloured races are barred from entering the Commonwealth. A few Chinese got in during

the early days of settlement, later a few Italians (who are still regarded as slightly off-colour) but that is all. The preponderant bulk of the inhabitants is British. With New Zealand this is probably the purest British stock in the world, a good deal purer than that of Britain itself; and this no doubt explains much in the Australian atmosphere, its *gaucherie*, its dominant Methodism. The law barring the coloured races is a nice piece of Anglo-Saxon sophistry. No one is specifically barred; immigrants are simply obliged to pass a language test. They must translate some fifty words of any current language which is set before them. Obviously it is all too easy to block an unwanted immigrant. The immigration officer simply looks at the prospective settler, sees that he is black or yellow and asks him to translate a passage of Rumanian or Hungarian.¹

Now Australia is bounded on the north and north-east by overcrowded countries with a native population of some four or five hundred millions. Clearly she could be engulfed by the Indians or the Chinese or the Japanese. From the days of the earliest settlers this has been feared. Living thirteen thousand miles away from Britain the Australians have always felt themselves a remote outpost of Europe, a stockade, a defensive garrison against the East. More recently the trades unions have taken up the cry of the white Australia policy. If natives are admitted they say wages will fall, the standard of living will go down. Labour will become a cheap commodity on the market. At the same time the unions have professed the most liberal views about the oppressed native races. They have opposed the Dutch and supported the Indonesians in the recent crisis in the Far East. A dozen ships full of food, medical goods and other supplies chartered by the Dutch were held idle in Sydney during the whole of my stay because the Australian wharf labourers refused to load them.

All this would amount no doubt to so much selfish and muddled thinking but for the fact that it is the Australians themselves, especially their womenfolk, who have suffered most as a result. The black labourers now starving in India and China would seize the opportunity of going to Australia and undertaking the boring menial work of the land. They would develop the

¹Some years ago the Commonwealth Government wished to block the entry of a middle European communist writer. He was handed a passage in Gaelic to translate; which, being a fabulous linguist, he did without difficulty.

semi-tropical north tenfold. But they are banned. The Australians do the menial work themselves. And so they achieve the exact opposite of their burning desire: they lower their own standard of living.

A belated effort (caused by the Japanese scare in the late war) is now being made to rush white immigrants into the country from Britain and Europe. At all costs Australia is determined to 'keep up the standard of the race', to 'preserve the white stock', to 'avoid the errors of the settlement of America'. In Sydney and Melbourne they have the greatest sympathy with the aspirations of the negroes. But they will not allow the negroes into Australia.

But let me return to my final impressions. After six months I did not find the collapse of moral values, the materialism and veniality of life, nearly so strong as at the beginning. In a new country it is the absence of known manners, the crudities of behaviour, which first affront the mind and twist the apperception of the visitor. He is repelled by the lack of form. His taste is offended. He is unused to the direct approach. The colonial settler who is forced to deal straightly and most openly with life despises the subtleties and tactful veneers of the leisured cultivated man; and the leisured cultivated man finds the simple colonial a bore. It takes time to bring the two together. And when they do come together it is the simple man who wins at first until he too succumbs (or advances) into a new set of subtleties and refinements of his own.

All this is, certainly, no more than the advance of youth upon age. How often has one called at the house of a friend and been appalled at the vulgarity, the noise and the crudity of his children. It is only on deeper acquaintance that one is attracted by their virility, their generosity and honesty; and this is what happens to the European visiting Australia. Underneath all the squabbling and awkward aggressiveness lie the basic human tendencies towards the good; and if one has to exchange manners for virility then perhaps it is no bad exchange. The reputed boastfulness of Australians, their inferiority complex exhibited through aggression, is clearly nothing more than the gauche adolescence that one sees in the son of one's friend. It is the revolt of the child against the parent. And underneath it is the pathetic cry of the child-adventurer, his desperate need to be understood.

These things constitute a tremendous difficulty in the way of the

intellectual or any European steeped in manners and customs who wants to go to Australia. He may yearn for the freshness of the Dominions, he may be in revolt against the complexities and the mental attitudes of the older civilisation: but has he the virility to meet the new? Can he stomach the initial crudities? Can he turn the clock back and sincerely tell the time again from the kindergarten hours relying on nothing but the sense of forward motion even though it is motion over ground he has covered before, hours that have ticked by with so much pain in Europe?

I do not believe he can. You cannot go to Australia any more than you can go to Arizona and hope that a geographical change of scene will evoke a new philosophy. It can be no more than a tourist philosophy. You cannot put the clock back. You can visit like Lawrence and produce perhaps one book. You cannot permanently identify yourself because there is no identifiable object upon which to attach your affections or your emotions or your interests which are foreign because they have all been made in Europe. The war between youth and age is implacable and unappeasable.

In Australia there is no climate for the mind. Or at least for the intellectual European mind. A writer would be lost for the lack of other writers and in the end, like Lawrence, he would have to go away. There is no atmosphere of writing in that small community (it is two-thirds the size of London), nothing upon which to whet his mind but his own contact with nature and the soon-ended rush of ideas which come with the arrival at a new place and the tasting of a new atmosphere. Perhaps Proust preferred to work in a padded cell in the Faubourg St. Honoré. But could he have worked in a padded cell in Wagga Wagga?

Possibly the painter would fare better and it is a notable thing that Australian painting is far ahead of the other Australian arts. (Two painters, Dobell and Drysdale, whose work is shortly to be exhibited and reproduced in London, are outstanding.) Clearly the fresh colours have been a great incitement and of all the arts painting is arguably the most spontaneous, the most attractive to youth. But how would a musician fare so seldom hearing a good orchestra? Or the dramatist and actor with no permanent audience? Or the architect with no money to spend, no dreams of grandeur in terms of stone? The Australian millionaire puts his money into racehorses.

There is in Australia a most vigorous and experimental culture going on, an excellent iconoclasm. But a great deal of it is still imitative of Europe. No genius has yet been produced in writing, sculpture, music, the stage or any of the applied arts. There is instead a body of first-rate journalism—the journalism of sound newspapers, of minor drawing and painting, minor poets, clever modern building, saleable designs in textiles. Much of this no doubt is due to the fact that this is a community as yet without a domestic history, without a folk-lore, without a cultural tradition. It is largely raw effort coming out of an intellectual vacuum. The Commonwealth has achieved great things in war and sport and social government. But it has little music, no real theatrical tradition, nothing new in dancing, in clothes, in wines and cooking; even the local slang is crude and without the American aptness and richness. Undoubtedly a new type of man is being formed—an emancipist, an independent and sometimes reckless character who resents his dependence on Europe and wants to break away though at the same time he is disarmed by a sentimentality towards his origins in Britain. The youth resents the strictures of his parents but an affection remains.

Australia in the end, I suppose, is the old story of the desert island. Can one create in a flowered and virgin retreat? Can one place the mind like a litmus paper on pure nature and take off a print which is a work of art? Can we have a whole colony of Gauguins on other south sea islands? The answer obviously is No. You may have an Abraham Lincoln who comes up out of the experience of the people, painfully, empirically, over a long period of time, a native of the place. But all colonies of intellectuals fail. The adult artist who goes out to the antipodes will not only have to cook his own dinner but create his own intellectual milieu as well. And this is impossible.

So much then for the Australia as it might strike the visiting European artist or intellectual. But to leave the picture at that would be not only grossly offensive but inaccurate as well. For the ninety-nine per cent of human beings who do not happen to be artists and those others who are not rooted in European traditions the Commonwealth offers a life which is immeasurably better than almost anything on this side of the world. Its people are kindly and generous and intensely alive. They have a brave and a proud record in their wars abroad and in the cultivation of

the land at home. All their instincts run towards the creation of a better future—a future which they are quite clearly going to achieve. Health, good faith, energy, high spirits, an optimistic outlook—all these are on their side because they are the virtues of youth. And there is a sense of freedom in living there, a sense of boundless possibilities in life.

Speaking generally then I would say this—if John were twenty and unmarried he could do far worse than go to Australia at once. If he were thirty and married he might still go and make a success provided he had a trade of some kind or a job to take up. At forty John would be advised to hesitate. At fifty he should stay at home.

SELECTED NOTICES

SWISS HUMANISM

Biologische Fragmente zu einer Lehre vom Menschen. By Adolf Portmann. Benno Schwabe. Basel.

Vom Ursprung und von den Grenzen der Freiheit. Eine Deutung des Spiels bei Tier und Mensch. By Gustav Bally. Benno Schwabe. Basel.

Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins. By Ludwig Binswanger. Max Niehans Verlag. Zürich.

In the well-known film *The Last Chance* the group of fugitives includes a scholarly man trying to save an important manuscript by carrying it over the mountains into Switzerland. Gusts of wind catch the typewritten pages and much of it is in danger of being lost. Looking at this incident, which was probably inspired by that excellent producer Leopold Lindberg himself, I could not help asking myself how much of European thought was being kept alive over there in Switzerland, while the common cultural structure of the Continent was being progressively destroyed. But after scrutinizing the best of the books which have been written and printed in Switzerland, I now feel that Europe has not in fact been impoverished from the cultural point of view. There has been no crude interruption of that continuity which is the most important factor in the development of vital thought. And there are at least three books by three Swiss authors which are intellectually stimulating, well written, and certainly powerful enough to re-educate Europeans or—to put it differently—to reintegrate European culture into some clearly defined whole.

These books are the work of scientists and their content is certainly philosophical. But they do not argue on superannuated lines, nor do they defend or attack a religious belief. They do not discuss what Wilhelm Dilthey has described as 'the boredom of traditional standpoints', such as nominalism, realism, idealism, priapism, carnapism and other kinds of adolescent nonsense. Bally, Portmann and Binswanger describe certain essential and pre-eminent attitudes of human beings in general. They do not argue that you must believe

in God or in Truth or in Beauty, that you must embrace Catholicism or Psycho-analysis, that you must make up your mind about Communism, or that you ought to write existential plays of frustration, crucifying yourself on the rotten wood of despair. Instead, you are given a sober account of biological facts which distils the very quintessence of our nature. These facts are morphological and they show, without refuting the theory of evolution, the enormous gulf between human beings and animals. The morphological type of man enforces upon us a special attitude and a special pattern of human behaviour; it preconditions our pre-natal genesis, our speech and brain development, our psychological and social conditions; it presents us with our Oedipus complex, and reconciles us to the miseries of our early frustration by the great pleasure which we derive from those mental activities which arise out of our childish catastrophes. These are the main ideas of Adolf Portmann's *Biologische Fragmente zu einer Lehre vom Menschen*.

Already the meaning and intention of our Swiss authors becomes clear. They are to counteract a mistaken set of ideas about mankind. Biological theories have been distorted in all countries to suit the purpose of a vicious kind of propaganda . . . in order that man might become enslaved. His very dignity was taken from him, so that he could be used by dictators in their power politics. He was told that he was no better than a cat or a dog, that the most he was entitled to was to be starved and killed by the million. Man was deprived of his dignity, so that he could be deprived of his rights. People wanted his labour, but they did not want to pay him for it. People took him away from his fields, from his work, from his family, from his love. They robbed him of his thoughts and his time, they put him in conflict with his instincts and ordered him to commit crimes against the voice of his own conscience. And for all this he was prepared by means of appropriate non-sensical biological theories: 'Look, it's all a question of the fight for existence, and your grandfather, who did so well in it, was just an ape. Why do you refuse to kill? Neither you nor your wife are anything more than a snake. Do you remember the Führer? Hitler himself was a reptile.' It is exactly this type of 'political biology' which Portmann exposes in his 'Biological Fragments' by showing that man is already man in the first stages of his individual growth in the womb. At no time is he a fish, a reptile, an ape. Shortly after his birth he weighs relatively much more than any other animal, because his body weight adjusts itself to a hidden giant brain. (It is 3,200 grammes in the average man as compared with the 1,500 grammes of the orang-utan, the highest average weight being 4,500 grammes. My own birth weight, as recorded by some gynaecologist, was 6,000 grammes; but I never became anything but a failure!) At six years old, the human brain is almost adult in size. But then there is a new feature that distinguishes us from the anthropoids: sex and intellect, germa and soma, develop at a different pace. Intellectual interests preoccupy the developing individuality of the human being while mere instincts and emotional experiences pass into some sort of hibernation period. And it is only when our intellect has matured and become fully differentiated that the emotional impulses of love, aggression and adventure induce the human being to function in the biological interest of his 'germa', his species and his community. It is this feature that seems to be the most characteristic quality by which man

is distinguished from apes and from animals: this split in the human being between instinct and intellect, between germa and soma. Men, because of their brain preponderance, develop an intellectual and conscious Ego, they become individuals in a centripetal sense, while animals are tied down to the dull instinct of their species. This is the great point of interest in Gustav Bally's book on *The Origin and Boundaries of Freedom*. If you happen to know the philosophical work of Sartre or even what has been written about indeterminism and freedom by some polemical don in this country, you cannot fail to be struck by the clear thinking of our Swiss author. Bally defines freedom as a purely biological item. Freedom means precisely the cortical independence of our mental behaviour, the trick of emancipation by which our person escapes from the compulsive force and relentlessness of purely instinctive actions. This independence of our enlightened and cortically guided person is, of course, only relative. Everybody has to worship the gods, everybody must eat or drink and pay some tribute either to Bacchus or Venus. Or, as it is put by Bally himself, there is an emotional abyss whose well-water we drink lest we perish by drowning in its flood. But with human beings there is, or should be, a lowering of tension as regards biological instincts. Nobody interested in modern thought can fail to be fascinated by those modern concepts of a new type of psychology which are used by the author, and which must be used if anything to do with instinctive human behaviour is to be understood. The notion of a psychological field and its tension is first of all used to explain the unifying process of instinctive action. As steel fragments in an electro-magnetic field can be co-ordinated and brought into line with each other by the attracting force, so the various elements of an instinctive action are co-ordinated by the attraction of forces produced by polar tension and constituting a 'field'. Such forces dominate all forms of life, uniting the hound with the fleeing hare, the tiger and its prey, the cat and the bird. Instincts and their field characteristics can be traced in the life of every individual. All human relationships are based on a 'field' of emotional tensions: comradeship and competition, childhood and parenthood, the relation between superior and subordinate, are all dynamically fused into an emotional unit, which I personally would call a 'field of existence'. Every one of these fields has its own direction, of course, a tendency which is the result of polarization, as between the hunter and his victim, the victor and vanquished, the lover and his beloved. Emotional drives can be sharp or relaxed, hatred between enemies may become red and white, and any kind of instinct and passion may lead on to major catastrophes. It is fascinating to follow Bally's demonstration of how, for instance, Köhler's apes found intellectual solutions for difficult situations only when their greed was diminished; whereas a dog failed to find the obvious way out through the back door of his cage whenever a piece of meat was placed right under his nose, but just outside the wires of the front of his cage. The feeding field became so highly charged with desire and appetite that the dog relapsed into primitive and unenlightened behaviour, and became helplessly immobilized by frustration in front of the meat.

What Bally described in the behaviour of these animals is the background against which the typical human attitude of intellectual freedom can be explained. This freedom can exist only when the fields of lower instincts are

no longer intense or, to put it differently, when certain essential conditions of human dignity are fulfilled. A man must be protected from danger and want before he can *play* with intellectual tasks and function in a cultured and dignified way. Only when the tension of instinctive and emotional fields is relaxed, when he need not be afraid of starvation or of new wars, will he use his cortical brains and go on living in a civilized way neither as a savage nor as a barbarian. The savage knows no way of life outside the fields of instinct and greed. He worships nature. The barbarian, on the other hand, is our civilized business man, who represses every kind of emotion and conducts his life in an apathetic and conventional way. But the individual who takes everything 'seriously' in a stupid and unimaginative fashion will never become an outstanding person or an asset to his community. What is really needed is a new equilibrium between our emotional disposition and the intellectual force by which it is developed and guided. Only by a decrease in emotional tension can we escape from the prison of our instincts and experience pleasure instead of merely satisfying crude animal needs. This can be illustrated already by the behaviour of one of Köhler's apes who was given two sticks and had a banana placed outside his cage. At first he could not manage to manipulate the sticks so as to get hold of the fruit. But when he turned away from the banana and just started playing about, he found he was putting the sticks together in a way which made it easy for him to fish the banana into his cage. But then he quite forgot his desire for any fruit and used his improvised instrument as a source of pleasure in itself, angling for the pleasure of angling. And that, says Bally, is in particular how human beings behave. Only when he was 'relaxed' in a bath did Archimedes conceive the idea of finding out the specific gravity of metals, so that the amount of gold in his king's crown could be measured. How many people are over-anxious to create what they call a work of art or a masterpiece? Would it not be better if they were to relax completely before starting?

And in a similar state of mind I like to approach the very dignified architecture of Ludwig Binswanger's 'anthropology'. There can be few people with more psychological experience than this famous doctor, thinker and psychiatrist, who has cured the most difficult mental cases by physical treatment, without losing sight of the patient's spiritual and psychological problems. Binswanger has been especially successful with patients of outstanding intellectual ability, understanding their problems by the grace of his own exceptional talents. His book *Patterns of Human Existence and its Interpretation* is intended for the learned public in general, not only for psychiatrists. The philosophy of this work will correct many wildly mistaken ideas about the group of early existentialists, not one of whom has so far been translated into either French or English. What people know about Scheler and Josef König, Jaspers and Heidegger, they probably know just by hearsay. Nothing could be more disastrous than emotional attacks on these thinkers, who worked on the firm ground of European traditions. Nothing could be more misleading than to mix up Sartre with Heidegger if the critic has not read Heidegger and if Heidegger uses a language of his own which is not even comprehensible to Germans. It took me seven months to read *Sein und Zeit* when it was published in 1927. Afterwards I wanted to discuss it with one of the leading

philosophers on the Continent, only to be frustrated by his answer that he was no longer young enough to learn a language which was used only by one single man. But if you do not understand Heidegger you do not understand Binswanger, who depends on Heidegger's language. Binswanger's idiom is even more difficult. There is a reason for the clumsiness of existential writers. Their language is more than a system of propositions: it communicates emotional experience and becomes itself its own emotional expression. It appears to be fluid, and almost inaccurate. Neologisms are in the making, and sentences creep along without any 'syntax' and skeleton. Binswanger, as an existence-philosopher, describes the 'being' and also his personal experience of it ('the being that is conscious of itself', to use one of Hegel's expressions): not only describing an arm and a leg and a marriage as they are if looked upon from outside, but also what they are, felt from inside, should arm, leg and marriage happen to be one's own, known and experienced in the full swing of their functions. Binswanger's 'new language' is obvious enough, and it is very different from that earlier and strictly conceptual idiom, which he used in his well-known *Introduction to the Problems of the General Psychology* in 1922. Then he was interested in abstract and rather conventional concepts, eagerly pursuing definitions of the term 'personality' which ever since has been so crucial for American thinkers. But even at that time Binswanger was influenced not only by Bergson, but also by Freud, to whom his early book was dedicated. And now, after so many years of discoveries and philosophical events, we meet a new Binswanger, independent and powerful enough to hold his own when confronted with existentialism of a special type and especially with the work of Martin Heidegger. But in spite of all the changes and differences one discovers again the great Freudian experience at the basis of Binswanger's thought, and one realizes how the healthy foundation of his unconscious must have been moulded and educated by Freud's personality, vision and genius. Binswanger is probably not even conscious of it, always shocked and (anthro)pologizing as he is, for the dated Freud's good or bad language. But I wonder whether Freud's idiom is really bad, considering that he was never a doctor of Divinity. There is no doubt as to Freud's existential outlook. He was already known to philosophers and was influencing people as important as Scheler, when his name was still taboo to psychologists. There is a straight line of development from Freud, Jung, Levy-Brühl, and Uexküll to Heidegger, and therefore to Sartre, who possibly does not even realize how much he is influenced by that very Freud whom he criticizes. When Husserl had abolished image psychology of the Wundt-Herbart school, Max Scheler persuaded him to introduce more dynamic ideas into the second edition of his *Examination in Logic*, so Husserl adopted Brentano's intentionalism. Influenced by Freud, Scheler himself went even further, created exactly those dynamic and trans-existential ideas with which Binswanger opposes Heidegger's philosophical attitude of stoic despair, nihilism and heroism, angst, death and 'Frau Sorge'. Thinking in terms of the Freudian dialectic of reality—principle and libido, Heidegger stands for 'Sorge', while Binswanger represents love. I personally certainly side with Binswanger in his attempt to combine the virtues of Martha with Mary's loving and spiritualized attitude. Angst, death and Sorge, as Binswanger

rightly says, cannot be adopted as the basis of our emotional being. Any mental case demonstrates the very neurotic and even pathological character of these poor sinister emotions of darkness. And Kierkegaard's writings are not for me, because I do not accept a sacred angst as a value. Anyone who tries to build on such a basis will drown in depression. If we are going to base our lives on any emotional value at all, it must be love. Both Freud and Scheler said so, and they were right. Angst is perverted love, the penalty of repression. When love is lost, we find ourselves gliding into misery; the very gaiety which carried us along drops out of our sails, our emotion degenerates into hatred, it becomes anxiety: we have nothing left to look forward to. Desire disintegrates, aggressiveness emerges. No, Freud says, do not die! Love and be loved! Love itself never dies: it is only the beloved object that changes. Binswanger would even have us believe that love lasts for ever and that the object of the love cannot change because true love is timeless and therefore eternal. Binswanger calls to witness Goethe, Shakespeare, Dante, Plotinos, Augustine and a lot of bad poetry. Do not smile at him because he stammers in so many tongues. Early Christians were only fishermen, and Binswanger is well read and a great scholar. Where he differs from Freud is obvious: Freud's pessimism on 'the future of an illusion' is especially painful to Binswanger whose book opposes the debunking of man and of those attitudes which are especially human. Freud is a materialist, Binswanger an idealist. To Freud even human love in its highest manifestations is 'nothing but' the outcome of evolution, to be understood on the basis of some animal and undifferentiated libido. To Binswanger love is divine or sacred, and Freud's undifferentiated libido 'nothing but' the various stages of its degeneration or decay. Probably it is unimportant whether one looks at a thing from above or below, as long as the object remains one and the same thing.

I do not extol Binswanger as a 'writer'. Heidegger is a great poet; when he speaks of death, guilt and Sorge, every sentence vibrates. There is a sound in his language, deep, sad, unforgettable. To speak of love, one needs the tongue of Echnaton, St. Paul, God himself, Christ. Binswanger speaks when he should sing or be silent. He behaves like a learned conductor, who tortures one for hours with a bad performance of Richard Wagner. I dislike his particular brand of enthusiasm. To me Max Scheler's subtle mind and feeling is in many ways preferable. Scheler certainly described love as a 'living together', but he was also in love with places, pictures and things. To Binswanger love in any form is romanticism, Wandervogel-Wirheit, Werfel's 'Wir sind!' Scheler's experience of love was very personal, unsentimental and individualistic: it held no suggestion of the boy scout perpetuating his adolescence.

'If I love you, what concern is it of yours?' Goethe said, as a believer in monads and pupil of Leibnitz. Binswanger, on the other hand, describes an experience of love as a dual affair. Experience of love is a 'meeting', a timeless moment of ecstasy unifying soul and soul, being and knowledge, partner and partner; extinguishing any self-centred ego by rescuing it from its isolation and bringing it back to the harbour and common life of the flock. If not a god, as it is with mysticism, Binswanger's love is at any rate a good shepherd.

Ancient philosophers formulated similar thoughts, but one peculiarity of

Binswanger's conception constitutes its special beauty with a perfect community. There will be not only unifying love, but conflicting interests as well; within one game the players act controversial parts. But the judge will pronounce his judgement on the guilty with a knowledge that he himself participates in his guilt. Why do we sympathize with Oedipus and Elektra? Because our own instincts experience a similar fate. Instincts reduce us into a state of (germa-) 'identity', of which our wisdom of love will give us a clearer vision and understanding. But above this layer of all-embracing 'identification' Sorge reappears as *principium individuationis*, isolating a person and stimulating his intellect into the frightful awareness of his nakedness and his fate, investing him with his 'freedom' and the power to provide for his needs. Sorge will always retain its relation to fear and be prepared for a possible conflict. But this ancestral fear is only a converted particle of that all-embracing and unifying love, which underlies the common field of personal interests and which, appreciated as power and reality, should prevent our human fights from becoming catastrophes.

Binswanger does not enter the district of metaphysics and higher speculation. He only refers to finite experiences; but although he himself represents a rather spiritual type, a coarse materialist like myself may accept his new bible; notwithstanding a certain stab of criticism which makes me wonder whether a beautiful doctrine really induces many people to behave beautifully.

Binswanger achieves a synthesis between romantic love and the realism of Sorge, by using the reality principle to curb his own romanticism. He revives living structures for us again and gives a new lease of life to a dead society. He also reminds us of how much we have been isolated, of how much has happened since Einstein, when positivism and neo-Kantian ideas fused into the new type of scientific philosophy. Problems which have arisen since, Binswanger indicates only by names, as for instance: Häberlin, Häring, Hönigswald; Löwith and Ebner; Jaspers, Gogarten, Josef König. Does anybody know them? I wonder how much of their work is important. But Binswanger throws a challenge right into the heart of this country, reminding us of how little we know of a whole edifice of new thought, well established on the firm ground of tradition. We must not be too complacent. One wonders how many philosophers have studied Husserl, whose *Examinations in Logics*, 1900, have been well received by several thinkers in Cambridge. And I doubt whether anything of Max Scheler's work has been read and considered worth studying, although his international fame has been great. We must educate ourselves in order to understand the highly differentiated mind of those people whom we are supposed to re-educate. I do not suggest that Scheler should be the king of a new fashion, accepted or entirely rejected, but that he should be allowed to provide us with a new stimulus. A number of socialists, by the way, quarrelled with him because he did not substitute the mechanism of a State-controlled charity for the warm impulse of his personal kindness. And the Pope did not agree with him either, because Scheler extended his love also to men and women, instead of concentrating on God and the cold-blooded fish. Personally I did not think less of him on that account. His outlook, on the whole, was progressive.

K. T. BLUTH



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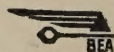
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